



# MSB OUTREACH PARENT NEWSLETTER



THE MARYLAND  
SCHOOL FOR  
THE BLIND

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## MSB SHORT COURSE PROGRAMS

By Ruth Ann Hynson

It's been a very busy and exciting start to the school year. We have continued to provide our Outreach monthly Short Courses and we held the first of 2 statewide parent conferences we will be offering this year.

Our first short course was a repeat of one offered this summer. In collaboration with the Downtown Sailing Center, students were able to participate in a 4 hour adapted sailing program on Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. Students learned basic sailing skills as they navigated Baltimore's Inner Harbor on sailboats. On Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, we held a Braille Carnival for elementary age students and had 40 people attend. Students participated in a variety of carnival-like braille activities, games and crafts. This short course was opened to students who were braille users as well as their siblings, friends and anyone who was interested in learning about braille. Our third short course this year was a regional workshop provided in Frederick. Called B.E.S.T., Building Everyone's Best Safety Techniques, this course focuses on strategies to increase self-awareness and self-esteem. It also provides instruction in stranger awareness and coping with bullying, including basic self-defense exercises.

Our next short course, Holiday Cooking/Crafts Make 'n Take, was held on Saturday, December 13<sup>th</sup> from 10-3. Students 12 and under participated in fun multi-sensory arts and crafts and cookie decorating. (and for interested parents, we had 2 different workshops available that offered instruction and encouraged independence w/ daily living skills)

Upcoming short courses will include an on campus course focusing on goal ball instruction on Jan. 24th, a regional workshop which will be held in PG County and will focus on instruction in daily living skills on April 18th and our final short course of the year will be in May and will feature instruction in beep ball on our newly renovated athletic fields at MSB. (more detailed info to follow)



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### Special points of interest:

- **MSB** Short Courses
- **The Braille Challenge**
- **MSB Statewide Parent Spring Conference** in Prince Georges County





## MSB SHORT COURSE PHOTO GALLERY



Dress-up time at the Braille Carnival.



Making gifts for the holidays.



“Here, let me help you with that.”

The Maryland School for the Blind

# MSB STATEWIDE PARENT CONFERENCE

By Renee Kirby



On Friday, November 7th, MD School for the Blind held our first Statewide Parent Conference. Parents, Guardians and teachers alike gathered at MSB's Russo Arts Center to spend a day participating in discussion and gathering new ideas to promote independence in their children/students. Outreach's own Sara Borlie and Genelle Hughes introduced kitchen and household tools and techniques to encourage independence at home with their blind or visually impaired child. Having the correct tools is the key when teaching daily living skills to blind and visually impaired students. Genelle is also available to visit the home and work directly with the student in familiar surroundings.

The day was also filled with great ideas and sports equipment to incorporate into home activities, exercise and team sports. Matthew Mescall, one of MSB's Adapted PE teachers supplied a plethora of activities that can engage the child without making them feel frustrated or incapable of joining in with their sighted peers and siblings.

MSB's Outreach Social Worker, Susan Vanderhoff, paired with myself in a workshop for parents focusing on the trials and tribulations that impact a family of a child with special needs. This workshop encouraged parents to participate and focus on the positive aspects of this situation. I shared some of my own experiences with my daughter who is 17 years old and who has attended MSB for the past 7 years. This opened up discussion and allowed parents to share and network.

Hadley School for the Blind joined us by Skype and provided some great resources and tools to use while navigating through their website, [www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu). Hadley carries an extensive list of continuing education courses as well as some online high school and college courses for the blind or visually impaired student.

Last, but not least, Josh Irzyk joined us to present on technology and the new PARRC assessments that will be introduced this year while phasing out the MSA assessments. He focused on what this will mean for our blind and visually impaired students and how we can make this a smooth transition.

If you couldn't attend this Parent Conference, MSB will be offering a regional conference in Prince Georges County in collaboration with the Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind on Sat., March 7th. We will send out more details when they are available.



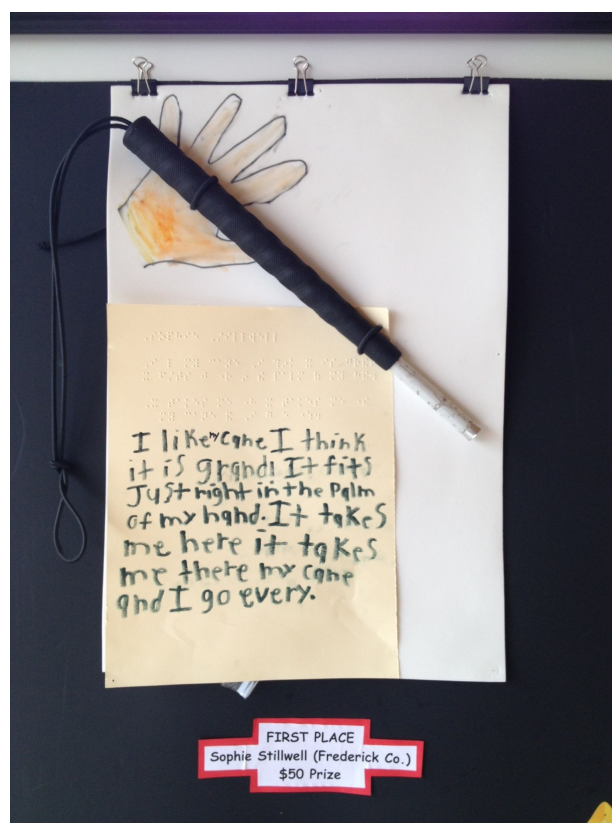
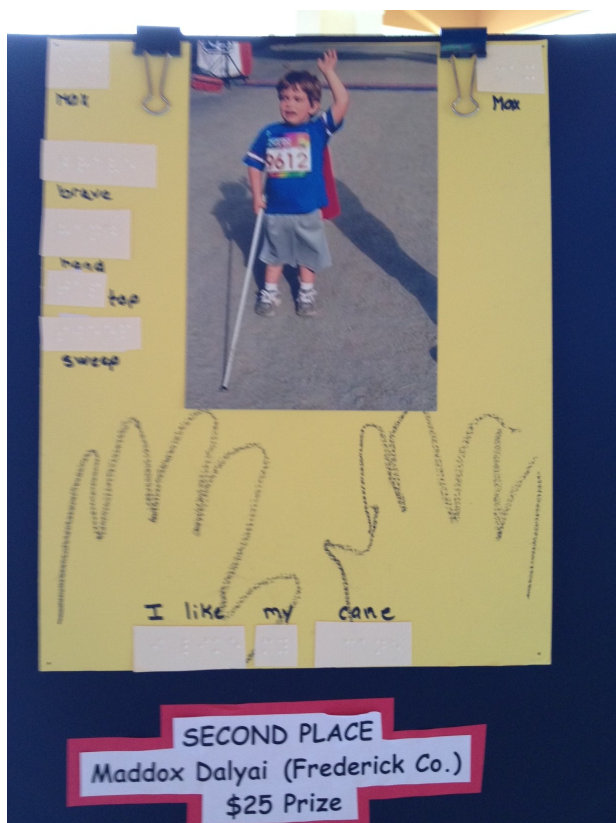


# White Cane Day Event By Ruth Ann Hynson

In October, The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) celebrated White Cane Month in honor of the 50th anniversary of National White Cane Day.

The White Cane, which has become an international symbol of independence for people who are blind and visually impaired, has historical roots at MSB. The long cane technique used to teach independent travel to the blind and visually impaired was developed by two former MSB teachers, Richard Hoover and Warren Bledsoe, who were recruited by the U.S. Army to assist in the rehabilitation of war blinded soldiers during WWII. Hoover eventually became a world renowned ophthalmologist at Johns Hopkins Hospital and served on the Board of Directors of MSB along with Bledsoe. The cane travel technique of using a side to side sweeping motion to detect obstacles and drop-offs in the traveler's path bears his name and is used worldwide.

Founded in 1853, MSB is a private, statewide resource center providing outreach, educational and residential programs to children and youth from infancy to age 21 who are blind or visually impaired including those with multiple disabilities. Annually the school serves 73 percent of the 1,800 students identified throughout the 24 jurisdictions of Maryland who are blind or visually impaired through its on-campus and outreach programs.





According to MSB President, Dr. Michael Bina, "The white cane is a tool that allows individuals who are blind or visually impaired to be more independent and fully integrated in the community. We are proud that Dr. Hoover and Mr. Bledsoe used their experience working with blind children here at MSB to benefit war blinded veterans and ultimately their cane technique has been applied internationally."

National White Cane Day was signed into law in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson as an opportunity to recognize the importance of this tool of independence for the blind. Traditionally celebrated annually on October 15, MSB devoted the entire month of October to the 50th anniversary celebration. Events were scheduled for each week of the month, culminating with the formal ceremony on October 29 which included a proclamation by Senator Katherine Klausmeier and the release of 50 white doves.

Another special event that was held as part of the month long celebration was a White Cane Poster contest. Back in September, we invited students from across the state and our students at MSB to participate. We asked them to use their creativity to depict why their white cane is important to them. We specifically wanted to know the message they wanted to share about the skills and independence they have gained from using a white cane.

We did decide to award a 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner and we did set a deadline for entries around the end of September/early October so that we could display the entries all month long. We did receive 7 entries from students who are representing 8 counties in Maryland: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Frederick, Garrett, Harford, and Prince Georges. One entry was received past the contest deadline and was not able to be part of the judging but we are still recognizing the student for her efforts and participation. We had a panel of judges who rated the posters in 5 areas: creativity, use of the theme of independence, use of braille, visual display and texture/tactual features. The student who scored the highest combined scores in all 5 areas was, of course, declared our winner. The contest winners were:

\*First place winner: Sophie Stillwell from Frederick County

\*Second place winner: Max Dalyai from Frederick County

\*Third place winners: Laurel Kirby from Carroll County and Jenny Espino from Baltimore County

\*Honorable Mention: Rigoberto Segovia from PG County, Aislin Severn from Harford County, Chanta Brown from Anne Arundel County and Miracle Pickrel from Garrett County





# Save the Date

**The Maryland Regional Braille Challenge is being held**

**Saturday, February 7, 2015 (Snow Date: February 21, 2015)  
at The Maryland School for the Blind Campus**



For interested students: Braille Institute is looking for students to test pilot an app to prepare students for participation in the Braille Challenge. The app includes a full report of student performance, including miscue analysis; all tied to the goals outlines in the Common Core Standards. Content also will be available in EBAE and UEB. Pilot begins in January 2015 and deadline to participate is October 1, 2014. If you are interested and would like more information please contact Jackie Otwell at [jacquelineo@mdschblind.org](mailto:jacquelineo@mdschblind.org) or 410-444-5000, ext. 1488.



## WINTER CRAFT IDEA



### Materials;

- 1 bobby sock
- Approximately 1 1/3 cups of rice — any kind
- 2 1-inch white pom poms
- Orange felt — just a small piece
- Large googly eyes (mine are about 1 cm in diameter)
- Adhesive-backed black felt—one sheet of sticky-backed felt is enough for 12 snowmen.
- 3 clear hair elastics. (I used goody brand, medium size. They come in tiny, medium and large sizes.)
- Hot glue gun and glue

\*Hint. When filling the sock with rice, you will need a helper. One person holds the sock open and the other pours the rice.

1. Pour just under 3/4 c rice into the bottom of the sock, and squeeze and shake it down until you have the shape you want for Olaf's bottom. Make sure that the top of the sock is centered in the middle.
2. Using a clear hair band, secure sock tightly just above the rice.
3. Pour just over 1/8 c rice into sock, squeeze and shake down the rice, and secure with second clear hair band.
4. Pour a little less than 1/2 c rice into the sock, , squeeze and shake down the rice. Shape the head so that it is taller than it is wide, and secure with third clear hair band.
5. Starting where the middle section touches the bottom section, secure the ball with hot glue so that Olaf keeps his shape. Repeat where the head and middle ball touch.
6. Starting with the mouth, peel the backing off the felt pieces (one at a time), and stick them to Olaf's face and body. (I did not provide a pattern for the nose, but any old triangle-ish shape will do!)
7. Glue the nose and eyes on with hot glue.
8. Add the arms and feet (white pom poms).
9. Don't forget the hair! \*Be sure to attach it at the bottom of the elastic hair tie, or it will look like it's floating.



## THE MARYLAND SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

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### ***MSB's Mission***

As a statewide resource center, The MD School for the Blind provides outreach, school & residential services for students to reach their fullest potential by preparing them to be as successful, independent & well-rounded contributing members of their communities as possible.

Since we 1st opened our doors in 1853, we have treated the whole child, not just the disability. We provide instructional, residential, orientation & mobility, recreational activities, sports teams, clubs, health services, physical, speech, & occupational therapies & braille instruction as well as all the basics: including math, reading, content & science.

We also understand the role of caring & compassion as it relates to our students. We never forget that our students have many specialized & unique needs. Most importantly, we never forget they are also children, youth & young adults.

