

**AERWAVES Newsletter**

**FALL 2018- WINTER 2019**

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**Convention Coordinator- Jennifer Hirai**

**News on the Idaho Front by Jenny Hirai, Idaho Rep.**

***IESDB and ICBVI news...***The IESDB Outreach has continued their monthly Zoom meetings to discuss upcoming events and issues. We are pleased to have Robin Clark, the ECC Coordinator for Utah School for the Blind and author of the Independent Little Bee website, as a presenter throughout the school year. She is sharing Expanded Core Curriculum ideas and resource we can use with all age groups.

The Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI) and IESDB held the Work Readiness Camp on the BSU campus. The schedule was filled with activities embedding skills needed for future employment. Social interactions and team work were incorporated in a ropes course and meal preparations. How to plan and complete a task were included a building a bird house at the Wood Shop and locating job applications in downtown Boise. The last day was a culmination of the introduced skills through a practiced job interview, complete with appropriate attire.

ICBVI has also hosted many one-day Blindness 101 clinics for professionals and parents to experience what it's like to use non-visual methods to cook, build, read Braille and more! Through WIOVA, ICBVI has created a new position, State Transition

Coordinator, and those of us in the field are thrilled to have Alison Steven take this new role. Alison is currently developing programs and activities for youth such as regional one-day independent living themed activities and a Summer Leadership Program, a year-long Leadership Program designed to give students opportunities to learn leadership and advocacy skills and to take initiative and contribute to their local community at the same time as building on their own strengths and interests.

**2019 Conference news...**Because Idaho's population continues to grow, most of us in the field are experiencing continued growth in our caseloads, which is keeping us all quite busy! One of the biggest gifts that NRAER provides is to allow us to expand our network outside of our individual states. In line with this philosophy, the conference planning committee has decided to have this year's conference at the magnificent Coeur D'Alene Resort in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, that we hope will have a broader appeal to our neighboring states, and maybe even those from far away. We have begun to lay the framework it looks like it will run from the evening of October 29<sup>th</sup> through the evening of October 31<sup>st</sup>...yes...Halloween...we promise to make it a Thriller of an event! One of the festive add-on experiences that attendees will be able to join is a dinner cruise right on Lake Coeur D'Alene.

The conference planning committee has been holding regular monthly meetings and would love your suggestions for presentations. I would love to hear from you at [jenny.hirai@iesdb.org](mailto:jenny.hirai@iesdb.org). For more conference information, please stay tuned to the next newsletter issue.

#### **2018 COSB Annual Awards Banquet**

By Pamela Boespflug

Louisville Kentucky hosted the APH yearly meeting, the Braille Prison Forum and the COSB (Council for Schools and Services for the Blind) Leadership Institute the first week in October 2018. Three people with roots in Montana were given prestigious awards with presentations from Donna Sorenson, MSDB Superintendent and Carol Clayton-Bye, MSDB Outreach Supervisor.

Richard Aguon MSDB was awarded the Outstanding Residential Life staff member. He has worked at MSDB since 1995 and is highly valued and sought out for his advise, support and communication and language skills. He has served on many school wide committees and serves the Student Life Program in many ways. He recently took on an additional responsibility the Food Service lead. He is appreciated for the many improvements he has implemented, his smiling and calm demeanor and is a motivation to many. Thanks Richard!

The 2018 National Champion award was given to the Northwest Association of Blind Athletes founded by Billy Henry in 2007. This organization provides life changing athletic and sporting opportunities to children, youth, and adults including military veterans throughout Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and Montana. Fifteen hundred people participated in NWABA activities and they hosted over 120 events in the Northwest. NWABA is changing the lives of children, youth, and adults who have visual impairments. Thanks Billy!

Steve Gettel, past superintendent of Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, received the 2018 Bill English Leadership Award. He began his career in the field of sensory disabilities 35 years ago at the Idaho School for the Deaf. He is currently the Superintendent of the Iowa Educational

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Iowa School for the Deaf. Steve's result-driven leadership and diplomacy have borne fruit in his work with legislators, personnel, and students. He has been a valued leader in many professional organizations that have benefited from his genuine caring, commitment, ability to listen, and wise guidance. Thanks Steve!

### **SKI FOR LIGHT**

Todd Fahlstrom <[todd.fahlstrom@usfamily.net](mailto:todd.fahlstrom@usfamily.net)>

Do you love to ski or snow shoe? Are you blind or willing to be a guide? 2019 Ski for Light Montana will be here before you know it. Dates are February 14-18 and will be held in West Yellowstone again at the Holiday Inn express. The web site for application and information is: [www.sflmt.org](http://www.sflmt.org). If you know of anyone either blind and wants to ski or you think they would be willing to be a guide, please pass on this information. Deadline for applications is January 1, 2019. If you would like to donate to the event to offset costs for food, lodging and rentals, please feel free to donate accordingly. I went February 2018 and had an amazing time. Patrick was my guide and in 3 days we did just over a marathon in cross country skiing. I will be going again in 2019 and am so excited to get outdoors.

### **2018 National Prison Braille Forum**

Pamela Boespflug

The 2018 National Prison Braille Forum was held in Louisville Kentucky sponsored by the American Printing House for the Blind on October 4. I a Montana program volunteer at the Shelby Crossroads Correction facility, along with two other people around the country, were awarded scholarships to attend the 17th annual Forum. Approximately 70 people from approximately 30 States attended this educational and motivational event. Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming are in various stages of Braille production within a Prison. The Braille Prison program is designed to help inmates develop skills to Transcribe print into Braille so when released have a marketable skill and local Blind students benefit from free Braille produced by the inmates. The Forum updated us on on National activities, showcase some specific processes in states, gave states a chance to share what they have been doing, gave us all a chance to listen to and network with ex-cons who have become successful Transcribers, and to learn how to make our programs better.

### **NRAER 2019 CONVENTION**

By Jenny Hirai, Idaho Rep.

Hello fellow NRAER'ers! I'd like to introduce myself as the Idaho Rep. for NRAER. Because Idaho's population continues to grow, most of us in the field are experiencing continued growth in our caseloads, which is keeping us all quite busy! I firmly believe we as professionals should support our professional organizations, especially since we are so few in numbers. I think one of the biggest gifts that NRAER provides is to allow us to expand our network outside of our individual states. In line with this philosophy, we are going to try to have this year's conference in a location that may be difficult for those of us in southern Idaho near the ISDB campus (like myself) but will have a broader appeal to our neighboring states, and maybe even those from far away. We have begun to lay the framework for next year's conference, and I am excited to share that the conference is set to take place at the magnificent Coeur D'Alene Resort in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho, and run from the evening of October 29<sup>th</sup> through the evening of October

31<sup>st</sup>...yes...Halloween...we promise to make it a Thriller of an event! One of the festive add-on experiences that attendees will be able to join is a dinner cruise right on Lake Coeur D'Alene. The conference planning committee has been holding regular monthly meetings and would love your suggestions for presentations. I would love to hear from you at [jenny.hirai@iesdb.org](mailto:jenny.hirai@iesdb.org). For more conference information, please stay tuned to the next newsletter issue.

### **Next Step Assessment Clinic**

The Next Step Clinic was held on November 2nd in Lander. The clinic offers educational assessments for students with disabilities through a transdisciplinary team structure using a play-based model. The assessment provides recommendations, validates current programming, identifies areas of need, and offers resources. The structure of each assessment is driven by the concerns of the student's family and educational team.

Depending on student needs, teams may include any of the following: autism spectrum disorder specialists, assistive technology specialists, deaf-blind educators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, augmentative communication specialists, speech language pathologists, teachers for students with visual impairments, teachers of the deaf, and orientation and mobility specialists. The clinic also includes a variety of medical professionals, including audiologists, low vision specialists, optometrists, psychologists, and a mealtime management team consisting of a nutritionist, a speech language pathologist, and an occupational therapist.

### **Date Set for Annual Wyo Rendezvous**

The annual Wyo Rendezvous Nordic Ski Day for children across Wyoming who have visual impairments will be held on February 21st at the Casper Nordic Trails Center. This is always a fun day for skiing, sledding and snowshoeing. Families and teachers also enjoy the opportunity to network. Games and new technology will be set up in the lodge, if participants want to take a break from playing in the snow.

### **Montana Report from Beverly Berg**

Blind and Low Vision Services

The good news for Blind and Low Vision Services (BLVS) has been able to take two people off the Order of Selection waiting list. The waiting list started approximately eighteen months ago. The VRBS bureau of which BLVS is a part brought a budget that was overspent in fiscal year 2017 by \$3 million to within a few thousand overspent. This was accomplished through several cost savings measures including hiring freeze, administrative approval of expenditures for client services and operations budgets and order of selection. Clients will be taken off the waiting list slowly as the budget allows.

The Great Falls office has permission to hire a supervisor and one instructional staff person which will be a vision rehabilitation therapist. As soon as the supervisor is hired then the vision rehabilitation therapist position will be advertised. The two other positions in the Great Falls office (orientation and mobility specialist and secretary) will remain open a bit longer.

Since July 2018 the Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Department of Labor were discussing moving Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services to the Department of Labor. This summer the draft of a bill was being written to present to the legislature in January. The anticipated move has been cancelled so BLVS will remain in the Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The National Federation for the Blind Montana Chapter, held its annual convention in Helena at the end of September. They passed several resolutions regarding legislation about services for blind children and penalties for guide dogs being attacked or harmed. The one non-legislative resolution was about filling the BLVS vacant positions.

The Montana Association for the Blind's convention convened in Bozeman the first weekend of October. A tour of the M.A.B. Low Vision Clinic was featured on Friday.

There were several breakout sessions Saturday afternoon about eye diseases & treatments, mobility, MSDB services for children, etc. Featured speakers talked about retinal implants and adjusting to vision loss.

The American Council for the Blind's convention was held the same weekend in Great Falls.

Staff News:

Mark O'Brien has been awarded the Dorothy Bridgeman Award by the Montana Association for the Blind. The award is for his dedication and work to further the independence of blind individuals in Montana and the work he did to create a driver's training video about the white cane law. This video has been distributed to all driver's education teachers in Montana.

Belinda Ballad is completing her internship for Orientation and Mobility. By the end of the year she should have her master's in O & M.

Melanie Beagle and Sheri Devlin have started master level classes in rehabilitation counseling to work towards CRC certification.

**The Montana Association for the Blind** is a non-profit organization, created in 1947, by blind individuals and their friends/family to aid in the education and support of individuals who are facing blindness. One of our long-standing programs is the annual Summer Orientation Program held in Helena, MT at the campus of Carroll College. We provide mobility and independent-living training to adults who have lost their vision. The program is one-month long – this year it will be from June 17-July 12. We provide this training to 20-30 students every year without charge to the Montana student. We are gearing up for the 2019 SOP and are looking to hire instructors. We usually have 2 certified O&M instructors who teach students and also supervise 2 interns. In addition, we need instructors in Braille, ADL, discussion, cooking, woodworking, computers, and more. If you are interested in working with us, please give us a call. In addition, if you know of anyone who would benefit from program, please call. We offer the training at no cost to Montanans, but do charge for residents of other states. To get more information, please contact Jocelyn DeHaas at 406-586-2276.