



CA STATE SPECIAL
SCHOOLS

Braille Bites

California School for the Blind

VOLUME 2, EDITION 1

NOVEMBER 2010

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Superintendent's message

By: Stuart Wittenstein

As **CSB** opened our 151st school year, there was a sense of our history with us and also a feeling of a fresh start and new hopes for the future. There was much excitement in the air as staff and students returned and new students began their **CSB** experience.

For the second year in a row, **CSB** opened our doors without a state budget and found ourselves working hard to continue to serve our students without the benefit of funding. These are very challenging times.

CSB continued to receive national recognition for our programming and history. The American Printing House for the Blind asked us to make a presentation about our 150th anniversary celebration to 400 attendees at their annual meeting of ex-officio trustees in Louisville - and they recognized our



student operated Lucky Touch Fortune Cookie Company with their 2010 Creative Use of Braille Award. What a thrill for the students and staff who have made Lucky Touch an internationally known enterprise which promotes the use of Braille, teaches valuable business related skills, and celebrates the Asian cultures of the San Francisco Bay Area.

We are proud of the achievements of our staff and students but we don't rest on our history of 150 years of quality educational services. We continue to innovate and direct our energies at expecting our students to achieve to their highest level of independence.

New CSB Report Card Form

By: Sharon Sacks

The **CSB** faculty has completed work on revising the school report card form. It looks much the same except more specificity is being given to how students complete their goals and objectives. At the end of each school quarter (October, January, March, & June) teachers will rate student progress using a numbering system. 1 = no progress, 2= progress is emerging (student performs the skill with assistance and prompts), 3 = student can perform the skill 50% of the time with minimal assistance, 4 = student performs the skill independently. Also, there is room for teacher comments on the report card form.

Look Who's New!



Angela Martyn
Assessment
Center TVI



Suzanne Shacoski
School
Psychologist

Short Courses are back at CSB

By: Barbara Maher

The week of September 13-17 brought ten students from all over California for a week of instruction in the Tech Lab. Students participated in APE, art and after school activities in addition to their time working with our technology experts.

The week of September 27, Short Course students took part in a week of Environmental Education in the Monterey Bay area. Activities included a kayak trip in Elkhorn Slough, a visit to the Aquarium, lunch with graduate students in Marine Biology at the Hopkins Marine Station and a volunteer project with the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. Students collected seeds from the Dune Buckwheat plant, a

vital part of the habitat for the endangered Smiths Blue Butterfly. The seeds will be planted by other volunteers. One student had this to say about her stay at **CSB** during tech week:

In her report on the week, she said she was surprised that she slept so well in a dorm room with a roommate, "without my mother and with a stranger but I think it's because I knew that I was, I am, and will always be safe at **CSB**."

That's quite a tribute to the **CSB** family from a newcomer.



A.P.E. News

This year the students in the Education Department have enjoyed many different activities to keep them physically fit.

Some of the students are participating in a **CSB** triathlon. The challenge is to walk/run on the treadmill for one mile, use the spin bike or the other exercise bike for a one mile ride, and the last part is to swim one lap in the pool as fast as possible. The triathlon is a chance to compete and improve as an individual. The students began in September and they will be tested again in December and then again in the spring to see how much they have improved.

The pool has been up and running and the students are working on perfecting their swim strokes and learning to swim the length of the

pool at a fast pace. Some of the students are more comfortable swimming several widths of the pool rather than venture into the deep end of the pool. As long as they keep moving, it's all good!

In the gym, the students are perfecting their skills in roller skating and some students are working on roller blade skills. The in-line skates (or roller blades) have 4 wheels in a straight line. The roller skates have 2 wheels in the front and 2 wheels in the back. Many of the students feel that roller blades are more difficult to balance on. A skate aid is a walker with wheels and that is a big help to some of the students. Other students use "human guide" or their cane for orientation in the gym.

As part of the "cool down"

By: Mary Alice Ross and Sue Swigart

portion of class, the students are learning deep breathing and yoga style stretches. "Pilates" has been introduced while stretching on the mats. This is a great way to transition from the vigor's of physical activities to concentrating on class work.

The students in the transition classes are enjoying the hiking program which runs through October. Coyote Hills, Lake Elizabeth, Quarry Lakes, Marina Park and other beautiful parks in the bay area have been explored by these students.



California School for the Blind Education Foundation

By: Sharon Sacks

Because of the generous support of **CSB** friends, families, and colleagues, our 150th Anniversary yielded funds to be used as seed money to start the **CSB** Education Foundation. The purpose of the foundation is to provide funds for **CSB** staff to undertake special projects and programs that cannot be funded with state funds. In a climate where funds are limited, the **CSB** Education Foundation will assist in insuring that quality programs and activities continue to exist. At present

paperwork is being completed to establish the foundation as a 501(c)3. Once all of the documents are filed, a board of directors will meet to review bylaws and establish a plan for raising funds. It is anticipated that an inaugural event, a Walk-A-Thon will take place in the Spring 2011. Look for the development of a **CSB** Education Foundation website. If you are interested in being on the foundation board, please contact Dr. Sharon Sacks for more information.

Blood Drive

By: Annie Foyle

We began hosting direct donation blood drives through UCSF in December, 2004, when one of our teachers was being treated for leukemia at UCSF and was in need of blood donations. Unfortunately, our dear teacher lost her battle with leukemia, however, we continue to host semi-annual drives in her memory and as a benefit for a current patient at UCSF. The nursing team from UCSF has become a part of our **CSB** family and we look forward to seeing them and catching up since the last drive. Each drive has a theme attached to it, including corresponding decorations, food, and attire. In addition to blood donors, we also have staff donate yummy treats and drinks, many of which are homemade. Our last drive, held September 15th, was a circus theme, including circus music, peanuts, caramel and kettle corn, animal cookies, and cotton candy. We have had many first time donors join the regulars, including several **CSB** students. These drives remind me each time what a great caring community we have at **CSB**. Thank you to each and every donor who continues to make these drives successful and fun!

Please mark your calendar for April 8, 2011, to come and donate with us at our next drive!!



When We All Work Together For Pedestrian Safety

By: Gary Shrieves, Orientation & Mobility Specialist

Pedestrian safety at the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Gallaudet Drive has been a matter of increasing concern at **CSB** for the past several years. Dr. Wittenstein and the Orientation and Mobility staff met with transportation engineers from the City of Fremont in April, 2009 to express our specific concerns about the intersection in hopes of working together to make improvements there. When the follow-up study from the city engineers produced no tangible results by late August, 2009 the Orientation and Mobility staff submitted a lengthy letter to the Fremont city engineers. This letter documented **CSB's** specific safety concerns about the intersection, featured first-hand accounts from numerous **CSB** staff who had experienced mishaps or near-misses at the intersection, and offered a list of possible solutions to increase pedestrian safety there. Dr. Wittenstein prepared a cover letter to Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman and sent him a copy of the detailed O&M letter in mid-September.

As many of you know, **CSB's** White Cane Day celebration on October 19, 2009 included a "March For Safety" along Walnut Avenue in the area of the problem intersection, in which students, staff, and guests from Sacramento and neighboring school districts carried signs, chanted slogans, and made positive connections with local motorists to promote public awareness and pedestrian safety. Despite our letters to the mayor and city engineers, and the spirited White Cane Day demonstration (to which Mayor Wasserman had specifically been invited but did not attend), no alterations were made to the intersection of Walnut and Gallaudet by the City of Fremont to reduce the hazard to pedestrians crossing there.

As incidents and near-misses at the intersection continued to be reported by **CSB** staff, a group of

Continued on next page

When We All Work Together For Pedestrian Safety *(cont)*

interested students and staff attended a meeting of the Fremont City Council on the evening of April 28, 2010. Speakers during the “open forum” portion of the meeting included Cheryl Besden, O&M Specialist, Jerry Kuns, Technology Specialist, and Ann Gelles, Braille Specialist, who described the problems at the intersection and shared first-hand accounts of hazardous crossing conditions there, including actual contact between vehicles and pedestrians. They were roundly applauded by an enthusiastic contingent of sign-carrying **CSB** students from the Northridge Dormitory and Apartment Living Program, as well as additional **CSB** staff and community supporters. Mayor Wasserman was present at this meeting, and although he could make no commitments on the part of the city, he stated that he took our presentation quite seriously and would refer the matter to the city engineering department for additional consideration.

Within weeks of a subsequent and less-than-encouraging meeting between the **CSB** O&M Department, City Engineer Frans van der Meer, and traffic enforcement officers from the Fremont Police Department in late May, 2010, the O&M staff was surprised and delighted to learn that Mr. van der Meer would be preparing a formal design modification proposal for the intersection of Walnut and Gallaudet, and submitting the proposal for a monetary grant under the federally-funded, state-administered *Safe Routes to School* program.

The proposal contains significant pedestrian and signal improvements for the intersection. They include elimination of the easternmost crosswalk for crossing Walnut (i.e. the one closest to the school) to reduce the left-turn hazard for cars turning from Cherry Lane onto Walnut Avenue. The southeast and southwest corners of the intersection would be modified in size and shape to reduce crossing distances and the speed of vehicles at the crosswalk for crossing Gallaudet. Advanced limit lines would be added to the crosswalk on Gallaudet to minimize the intrusion of “waiting vehicles” into that crosswalk. Finally, a countdown feature would be added to the pedestrian signal system.

Renee Dalton, associate transportation engineer for the City of Fremont, said that the city’s Transportation and Operations Department hopes to be informed of the grant award by this fall. If the grant (which could be as large as \$300,000 for the Walnut and Gallaudet project alone) is awarded to Fremont, construction could begin within three months of notification. The city would be required to finish the project within two years.

Although it has taken **CSB** students, staff, and administrators many months, a number of pages of detailed documentation, a White Cane Day “March For Safety” event, an appearance before the city council, and several meetings with city engineers and traffic enforcement officers, the City of Fremont is now on record as acknowledging the pedestrian safety hazards in the neighborhood of our school, offering specific remedies, and seeking funding to make the necessary alterations at the corner of Walnut and Gallaudet. This is what can be achieved when we all work together both campus-wide and community-wide toward a common goal, approach a problem with creative ideas for both illuminating and solving it, and are respectfully persistent in our commitment to see the process through to the desired result.

Whether you are pedestrian or a driver, *please* continue to use your safest travel skills and exercise extra caution at this intersection, especially until it can be physically altered for improved safety. We are hoping to have good news from the *Safe Routes to School* grant program and the City of Fremont to share with you in the next issue.



Admissions Process at CSB

By: Maureen Reardon

Two of the questions that come up often about our school are: Who gets in, and why? And then, how do I apply?

The **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind (**CSB**) serves students whose primary disability is that they are blind or visually impaired, or are deaf-blind, with a severe sensory loss that “affects the pupil’s ability to access the general curriculum or alternative curriculum. . .to such an extent that it adversely affects his/her educational performance requiring the services of personnel trained to work with blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind children.” Ed.Code §§ 59020, 56342(a); 5 CCR §§ 3030(a); Currently, students at **CSB** range in age from 9 to 22.

Many Local Education Agencies (LEA’s) have appropriate programs for children with severe visual impairments. Some are able to offer services to a portion of their students with visual impairments. When an LEA cannot offer sufficient services to meet a student’s identified visual needs, they refer the student to **CSB**. At the request of an LEA, an application is forwarded to the district. The application outlines required information for the application, contains a statement of eligibility criteria, requests permission from the LEA to consider the student for **CSB** placement, and includes forms for completion by the district and family.

The completed application is reviewed by the Admissions Review Committee (ARC), who may determine that the local program appears to be an appropriate one, that **CSB** does not have the ability to offer a comparable program, or that there is not an appropriate placement available at **CSB**. If the ARC determines that there are possible placement options at **CSB** which will meet the student’s needs, an observation of the student and his/her program is arranged. **CSB’s** staff will meet with the LEA and the family, as well as the student, and staff will report their findings to the ARC. The ARC will then determine the prospective **CSB** placement, and forward a medical packet to the student’s family.

When the student has received health clearance from our student health unit, a start day is arranged for the student. The admission is for a “60 day assessment for placement,” and the student begins attendance at **CSB**. Districts and families receive weekly reports, and at the end of the 60 day assessment, districts and families receive a report on the students assessment and attendance. A meeting is held to review the data regarding the student, and to determine whether **CSB** will be an appropriate placement. If **CSB** is such a placement, an IEP takes place immediately to start the student in his/her new program.

Questions? Contact Maureen Reardon, J.D., Director of Student Services, at 510-794-3800, extension 311, or , Annie Foyle, at 510-794-3800, extension 211.

Self-Determination

By: June Waugh

What is self-determination, who has it, and how do I get it? In the morning do you decide what time to get up, what to have for breakfast, what to wear, and what activities you plan on doing that day? Each of these choices and decisions is a part of self-determination. When problems come up, do you have the skills to solve them? Can you set goals and make a plan to attain them? Can you make your dreams come true? Do you believe that you have inherent worth and expect others to believe it too? Can you speak up for yourself and advocate for your rights in an assertive and effective way?

Self-determination is living a good and meaningful life, with the knowledge and skills to create the world you want to live in.

Self-determination is the most recent area to be added to the Expanded Core Curriculum for Students with Visual Impairment (ECC). The ECC consists of nine content areas that are specifically taught to students with visual impairment, who might otherwise not incidentally learn them as sighted students would. These content areas are the essence of the **CSB** curriculum, along with the California State Standards for the Core Curriculum. The ECC areas are the following: compensatory or

functional academic skills, including Braille instruction, orientation and mobility, independent living skills, assistive technology, recreation and leisure skills, career education, and sensory efficiency skills. This year **CSB** is highlighting two areas of the ECC – social interaction skills and self-determination.

Self-determination is the underpinning of everyone's sense of autonomy and mastery. The skill areas of self-determination are the following: choice-making skills, decision-making skills, problem-solving skills, goal-setting and attainment skills, independence, risk-taking and safety skills, self-observation, evaluation, and reinforcement skills, and self-advocacy and leadership skills.

These skills can be taught and reinforced both at home and at school. Whenever possible, allow your student to make choices and decisions and live with the consequences. For everyone, life is a process of trial and error to learn who we are, what we like, and where we are going. Our students have the potential to be in charge of their lives to the fullest extent of their abilities. With opportunity, practice and encouragement, they will learn how to be confident in their abilities and able to find their place in the world.

White Cane Day 2010/Recreation Opportunity Fair

By: Francey Liefert

Each year since 1964, on October 15 our country observes White Cane Safety Day. The day is set aside to publicize the rights and celebrate the independence of Americans who are blind and visually impaired. It's become a great tradition at the California School for the Blind to observe this day each year.

On Oct. 13, 2010, a couple days early, we held a Recreation Opportunity Fair at CSB. Presenters arrived early in the morning with SCUBA equipment, an audible dart board, a sail boat on the lawn, archery equipment, board games, artifacts from a state park as well as snow skis and water skis. This wealth of recreational equipment was added to presentations of activities we already have at the school: swimming and kayaking in the pool, art lessons, gardening ideas, percussion instruments, narrated video, computer games, martial arts experiences, additional board games, tandem bikes and all kinds of options for leisure reading. What a day we had!

Over 100 people from visually impaired programs of nearby districts joined us for the day to sample recreation opportunities. CSB student ambassadors made them welcome and helped them find the locations of each activity they wished to try out. At lunch time, our kitchen staff prepared a barbequed hot dog lunch, and everyone enjoyed a break in the activities out of the sun.

A directory of recreation opportunities has been compiled for people who are blind or visually impaired throughout California. It will soon be available on the CSB website. If you would like a copy right away, please contact Francey Liefert at: fliefert@csb-cde.ca.gov.



Longstanding Program Makes Changes

By: Julie Manning

Any time you sincerely want to make a change, the first thing you must do is to raise your standards. *Anthony Robbins*

Last school year the teachers, psychologist, and administrator working with the High School Mainstream program took time to analyze the program in its current form. The goal was to take a realistic look at the program and determine where changes could occur.

Program strengths and weaknesses were examined, along with psycho educational assessments, IEP progress data, graduation rates, and state testing results. Feedback was gathered from current and past students along with teaching, administrative, and residential staff from within the school. Comments and input from professionals in the field of vision impairments and from the local high school were compiled, reviewed, and considered.

After much work, a redesigned curriculum was presented and accepted by our superintendent. For students entering the High School Mainstream, primary importance is placed on addressing academic gaps and basic classroom preparedness skills while maintaining an ever-present focus on the integration of technology.

A thorough assessment of academic skills, aligned with the state standards, in reading, writing, and mathematics are conducted immediately upon intake. Assessment of basic skills in O&M, Technology, and Braille are also completed and shared within the first few weeks. In combination, these assessments provide important information used to design a student-specific remediation plan.

During this first semester, students participate in an intense, hands-on, series of basic high school preparedness skills. This includes short and long term organization of papers, equipment/materials, homework assignment, planners, and backpacks. Basic preparedness also extends to proper note taking, studying, test taking, and advocating.

We look forward to updating readers on our progress.

The California Great Shakeout

By: Annie Foyle

CSB participated in the *California Great Shakeout* on Thursday, October 21st. The day included a “drop, cover, and hold” drill, a campus wide evacuation drill, and a Personal Emergency Preparation (PEP) Training presented by Fremont Fire Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Some valuable emergency preparation tips they shared include:

Establish an out-of-state contact

- A central point of contact for all family members to call to check on those possibly affected by an emergency
- Reminder that we may not be able to make local calls, however long distance calls may be accessible.

Establish a family evacuation plan

Have plenty of water stored

- 1 gallon per person for 7days

Have a supply of non-perishable food (and a can opener)

Keep an emergency kit in your car (water, blanket, first aid...)

Know how to turn off the gas, electricity, and water at your home

Attend emergency training classes in your home town

- Contact your local fire department for available classes



CSB Lucky Touch --- Be proud

By: Silvana Sung

“Be Proud” is one of the Lucky Touch Fortune Cookie Company sayings. Now Lucky Touch is really going to be proud of its achievement. On October 15th, Lucky Touch received the “Creative Use of Braille” award from American Printing House. This award is the same level as the award given to Wayne Thompson and Fred Gissoni for inventing a pre-cursor to Braille note taking devices in 1998. Dr. Abraham Nemeth received the award for the Nemeth Code in 2001. Dr. Sally Mangold’s speech assisted learning system won the award in 2003 and Braille Institute was honored for the Braille Challenge in 2006.

With the support of American Printing House, Judith Lesner and I went to Louisville to receive the award. Dr. Wittenstein accepted the award on behalf of our school and then Judith and I each had the opportunity to tell the Lucky Touch story and to thank APH.

APH accommodated us in the Galt House Hotel suite. What a lovely suite! We visited the APH building. It is amazing to see how all the high quality books, tapes and equipments are made. They attend to all the details, making sure there is no mistake in making their products. In the arrangements, meetings and presentations you will notice all the APH personnel are so organized and professional. On the day of the award ceremony, APH even ordered our cookies to give to the attendees. That night we were invited to the APH InSights Art Banquet. Four of our **CSB** students’ art work won awards. They were displayed in the InSights Art Exhibition. Travis Erdmann’s painting collage “Monster Mash” was first place in ungraded category. Samantha Covington’s ceramic sculpture, “Peaceful Dreamer” was third place. Kiko Duenas’ tactile drawing, oil pastel on cardboard and Robin Patche’s painting of a mountain sunset received honorable mention.

Going back to Lucky Touch history---In 1996, Judith Lesner, a residential supervisor then, initiated the idea of putting Braille fortunes inside the fortune cookies. I still remember the afternoon that Judith and I walked around Chinatown to find a fortune cookie company that would put our Braille sayings into the cookies. Finally the last one we visited agreed to work with us and we found out the regular Braille paper would survive the heat of the hot cookies. “Lucky Touch” was named by students in a school-wide competition. We produced the giant cookies first, then the small cookies and then the chocolate dipped cookies. Cookies were sold in school functions, conventions and to agencies. Lucky Touch had been featured in newspaper, local T.V news, radio shows and a documentary film. It was so famous that different corporate giants ordered from us.

The recruited **CSB** student brailleists braille the sayings of different orders two days a week after class time. They worked hard to see the orders were finished on time. I am proud of them as their Braille skills improve as time goes on. Their neatness and accuracy show in their brailleing. I can see the members of the Board of Directors mature as they make decisions and conducting an interview for new members or being interviewed. They worked diligently when assembling different items to sell in the school concerts or conventions. Their hard work is paid with the profit and they all enjoy the rewarding Chinese dinner at the end of the school year when there is an excess profit.

I can say Lucky Touch is the only Braille fortune cookie company in the world. The success of Lucky Touch is the results of the hard work of different **CSB** staff, past and present and the support of our customers of **CSB** staff, parents and all the blindness community. Thanks to all who participate to make it a well known student operated business.



“Dreams do come true” Lucky Touch!



If you would like to contribute a future article for Braille Bites, please send it to: jrudder@csb-cde.ca.gov