



CA DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
STATE  
SPECIAL SCHOOLS

# Braille Bites

## California School for the Blind

VOLUME 4, EDITION 1

NOVEMBER 2012

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Preemies 4 Preemies	3
Walk-A- Thon	5
Haunted House	7
CSBEF	8
APE News	10
Attendance Policy	11
GG Bridge visit	13

### Superintendent's message

By: Stuart Wittenstein

Each new school year brings a fresh start and renewed enthusiasm and hopes for our students. As you will read in this issue, **CSB** is already off and running (and walking and paddling and rowing and helping others).

As this issue went to press, important events were underway. Our **CSB** Jazz Ensemble played for the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. The state directors were entertained, but also learned what wonderful young men and women attend our school. Our students were outstanding representatives of **CSB** in their demeanor and attitudes as well as their excellence in musicianship and vocalizing.

The next morning our outstanding assistive technology team made a presentation to this national meeting. They emphasized the importance of assistive technology in the educational and personal lives of students who are blind or have visual impairments. In addition, they demonstrated the need for schools like **CSB** to assist students and teachers in school districts to stay current on the best technology choices available for access to the curriculum and the world.

So, **CSB** is off and running for a new school year. And in this issue you will find news about our parents and friends association and our new education foundation. They need your support and so does **CSB**. We do our best to enrich our students' educational experience so that they are prepared to transition to new environments and be fully participating members of their communities. We strive to educate the whole child – the whole student – and provide a well-rounded education. Thanks to all of you who support these efforts with your advice and wise counsel.



# LOOK WHO'S NEW!



Erica Hogle  
O&M Intern



Jenna Whitelaw  
O&M Intern



Laura Pica  
Teacher



Korbin  
Dog Guide

## PREEMIES FOR PREEMIES

By: Annie Foyle and James Rudder

During this past year, we had two different groups participate in the Preemies for Preemies (P4P) ECC program. P4P started as a group of **CSB** students who were born premature making baby blankets for premature babies born at Lucille Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. The second group was opened to any interested student. These blankets were made from fleece material of various colors and prints, pre-cut and ready for the students to tie knots in the end of each cut



strip around the blanket square. We made a total of 41 blankets which we delivered in



July to LPCH at Stanford. A combination of students from both groups took a field trip to deliver the blankets, tour the NICU, and also enjoyed a lunch at *The Counter* in Palo Alto. The students understood and enjoyed their contribution in giving back to the community and being able to bless a baby and family going through a challenging time in the hospital. We hope to continue this program in the future.



**PARENTS AND FRIENDS NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!!!**

“What have you done for **CSB** lately?” you might ask. Well, we are glad you asked. We helped fund the Karate and Goal Ball trips including paying for uniforms, we sent students to a minor league baseball game, we funded baking equipment for Mr. Waite’s class’ baking project, we provided equipment for the tech lab, we are funding a “Haunted House” for this Halloween and funded many trips for school classes and dorms. Over the last few years we have organized Snow Day, Carnival and Annual Staff Appreciation Days. We are extremely proud of having given the “seed money” to jump start Lucky Touch Fortune Cookie Company, the Student Store and the Rocket Shop which are all now an integral part of the **California School for the Blind**.

We were started about 30 years ago by the parents of a student who got a donation from his company. Over the years we have grown and are now a recognized 503© non-profit organization. The Board of Directors meets about 4 times a year and regularly stay in touch through email and phone calls. The board hosts two annual events, the Welcome Back Breakfast for staff and Staff Appreciation Day.

All **CSB** families are automatically members of PFA. You are a member without any cost or effort. Now, we are reaching out to increase membership in our Board of Directors and increase our support.

The PFA Board of Directors has always been a few dedicated volunteers working with the **CSB** staff person designated “PFA Liaison”. For the last few years that has been the hard-working, patient and creative Staci Gonzales. Now, with Staci’s departure it now rests on the shoulders of the four PFA officers. We do not know if **CSB** will be able to fill Staci’s position because of the budget cuts and the hiring freeze now in place. What does this mean to our continued existence? It means that more than ever **WE NEED YOU!** How can you help? You can join our board of directors, help us sell shirts the afternoon and evening of the Winter Concerts, ask friends and relatives to contribute, come up with new fund-raising ideas, work on events, etc.

If you can help in any way, please contact Board President Theresa deMahlerbe at 510 303-0332 or Sara Cowan at [saratcowan@yahoo.com](mailto:saratcowan@yahoo.com).

## WHITE CANE DAY WALK-A-THON

By: Jim Blackshear, O&M Teacher

National White Cane Day was on Monday October 15<sup>th</sup>. Here at **CSB** we like to celebrate this day in a big way. This year students and staff had a walk-a-thon to benefit **California School for the Blind Education Foundation (CSBEF)**. Participants walked 1.7 miles and at last count made \$4500.00. Several students and teachers from surrounding districts came to participate in the White Cane Day activities. After a Barbeque lunch there was an assembly recognizing businesses in the Fremont area that have been supportive of our students and school. AC Transit, Niles' Bronco Billy's Pizza, and Fremont's Mission Coffee and Raley's all received certificates of appreciation for their years of support and good relations. Anthony Daniels' karate group energized the crowd with self defense techniques and conflict resolution strategies they have been practicing. Wayne Siligo and students Travis N. and Jenna B. performed an inspired rendition of the classic tune Achy Breaky Heart with lyrics adapted to celebrate the white cane. Students Natalie C., Evelyn R., Diego G., and Josselin C., made Anne Gelles proud as they showed off their Braille reading skills while reading several stories. A good time was had by all.



## ROWING AT CSB

By: Mary Alice Ross

The APEX Wellness Center in San Francisco had a fund raiser at their facility this summer and raised enough money to buy **CSB** 3 rowing machines. The 3 rowing machines are in each of the 3 dorms.

Dino Adelfio and his staff run a program called Stroke Fitness in San Francisco. [Strokefitnessprogram@gmail.com](mailto:Strokefitnessprogram@gmail.com)

They are committed to a Wellness model and also to giving back to the community. In September, the rowing machines were delivered to the gym and we had the students learn to row by the instructors so that their technique and training came from the experts.

Dino, who runs the program, is also an expert on nutrition and wellness issues. He is coming back to **CSB** to work with some of our students in the Fitness Center and speak about food choices and working out.

This has been an incredible gift to **CSB**. The students have responded so well to this instructor and to his knowledge about fitness and nutrition.

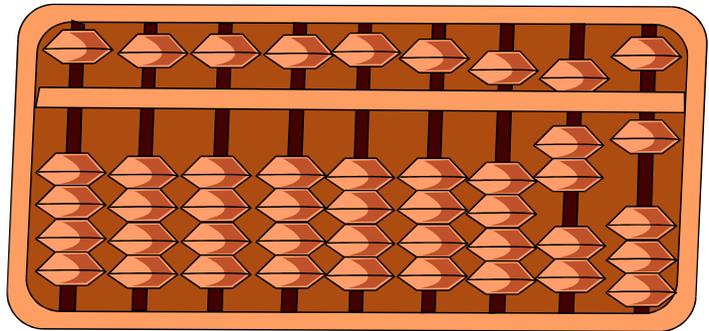


## COUNTING ON THE ABACUS

By: Alysa Chadow

I'm lucky enough to have an abacus student in my class this school year. There was a time when I would not be attaching this happy label to the event. Then I had a classroom full of abacus learners this past ESY, and I became a believer.

The reason for my conversion is simple: the abacus makes math easier because it makes it visual and tactual. You can't beat that combination when working with a population of students who are either totally blind or partially sighted. You also can't beat it when those students are not huge math fans to begin with.



In short, abacus makes math fun. One of the things that I like to do with my abacus student and classroom assistant is take turns giving out addition problems to work. It's been more than once that at least one of us has made an arithmetical error, but never an abacus-related one. The key is lots of practice.

Another great advantage of the abacus is that it's as portable as a calculator, but a lot quieter. Sometimes a clicking bead is preferable to the voice output on a talking cell phone, calculator, or the Braille Note (at least you can turn off the speech on the last one).

Try incorporating the abacus into O & M lessons or keeping score in Braille Scrabble (we do the latter). Cooking and shopping would benefit, too. Just count on the abacus...and your own imagination.

## HAUNTED HOUSE

On October 31, a group of CSB students and staff opened and performed a Haunted House. The group of students, Travis N, Travis E., Jack G., Erick S., and Sebastian D., along with help from Annie F. and James R. met for several weeks planning and organizing this event.



The haunted house had 4 themes to walk through: starting with the ‘Dungeon’ then to ‘ghost alley’, then to the ‘swamp’ and then to ‘spider lane’. The students then finished it off with a tactile room; feeling pretzels for bones, spaghetti for guts, peeled grapes for ghost eyeballs, a cauliflower for a brain, along with pumpkins and gourds, a metal spider and rubber snake. Each student who explored the haunted house received a treat bag which was a plastic glove filled with popcorn and candy corn and a plastic ring accent.

Students who were afraid of the haunted house were offered an unhaunted version which meant the lights were turned on, and all sounds were off.

The haunted house was a huge hit! Some students thought it was great, while others wanted it scarier.

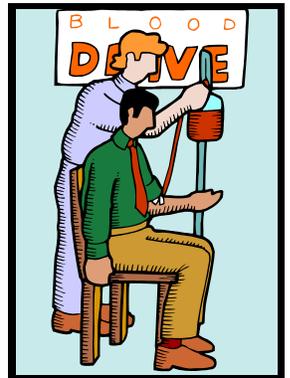
Plans are already in place for next year’s haunted house which we hope to be bigger, better and SCARIER!



## BLOOD DRIVE

By: Annie Foyle

On September 11<sup>th</sup> we had a Patriot Day themed UCSF Blood Drive. As September 11 has been declared the *National Day of Service and Remembrance*, we were excited to be participating in such an important event. The **CSB** community again showed their compassion, desire for giving back and helping where there is a need. We had a total of 29 donors sign up, of which 9 were **CSB** students. We enjoyed the morning with lots of yummy goodies, and were also blessed with several “give aways” (flag/ribbon pins, Starbucks gift cards, rubber duckies with flags). When the students were asked why they donated, here are some of the responses: “to help people who needed it”, “because I can save people’s lives”, “I feel it is one way to give back to those who are less fortunate than I am and who need blood transfusions”, “to help people, and for the sweets”.



A big **THANK YOU** to all who donated blood, goodies, and time to make this another successful blood drive. We will plan another drive in the spring.

## CSBEF: OFF TO A GOOD START

The mission of CSBEF is to support education and training programs for staff, students, & families at the California School for the Blind. The foundation’s focus is on enhancing the array of education-based opportunities for staff & students. In a time when budgets are tight, these funds will allow teachers and others to attend training and conferences, allow classroom teachers to create special projects for their students, allow students to attend athletic and other competitive activities, and support programs like the schools assistive technology or low vision programs. The Foundation completed its first major fund raising campaign. The White Cane Day Walk a Thon raised \$4500.00 in pledges. US Association of Blind Athletes has graciously donated another \$3000 earmarked for sports & physical education activities.

The Foundation Board wishes to seek grant funding or donations from businesses and local organizations. The board is looking for additional board members. Please think about helping to support this very important foundation.

## LGBTQ AWARENESS

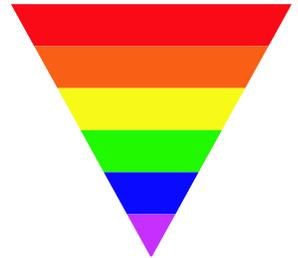
By: Jim Blackshear

On October 11<sup>th</sup> **CSB** staff and students participated in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Day (LGBTQ) as part of the FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act\* . Individual classes learned about LBGTO people as part of **CSB**'s ongoing anti-bullying campaign. Here are some of the facts student's learned:

- LGBTQ youth are up to nine times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students report verbal, sexual, or physical harassment at school.
- One- third of LBGTO students skipped at least one day of school in the past month due to safety concerns.
- Gays and lesbians are also important historical figures.

Emphasis for all classes was the idea that every student has the right to feel safe and supported in the school environment. To that end bullying of any kind including bullying due to someone's sexual orientation will not be tolerated.

\*The FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act is a common sense law that requires schools to integrate factual information about social movements, current events and history of people of color, people with disabilities and LGBT people into existing social studies lessons. It also prevents schools from adopting instructional materials that discriminate.



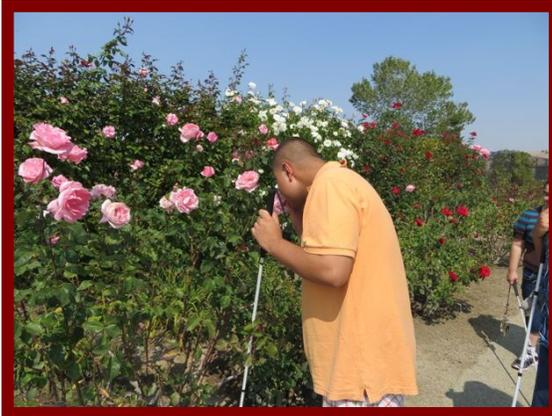
The rainy season is fast approaching and California really needs the rain. Don't forget that Northern CA can be pretty wet from November to March. Students are out and travelling in all types of weather so don't forget to send rain boots and rain jackets during what we hope will be a wet winter!



## ADAPTED PHYSICAL EDUCATION (A.P.E.)

By: Mary Alice Ross

The **CSB** transition students have been enjoying the outdoor education hiking program at various local East Bay Regional Parks this semester.



The students have hiked at Quarry Lakes

(some students even swam in the lake). They also have hiked at Lake Elizabeth, Coyote Hills, Sunol regional park, Marina Park near the Oakland airport and many others.

Check out our students smelling the roses!



## CANOE, CANOE AND KAYAK TOO!

By: Mary Alice Ross

**CSB** has a new canoe in the pool. Students are learning the forward, backward and side strokes for canoeing. In addition, they learn to turn the canoe around and maneuver in a small space (the width of the pool).

The canoe serves many purposes. **CSB** students learn the basics of canoeing and boating prior to going to a community lake. They also learn to put on a lifejacket and the importance of safety in a boat.

Tipping the canoe over in the warm 90 degree indoor pool is a fun activity but also teaches the students what to do in case they do tip over on a lake.

To paddle a canoe, the students use a single blade paddle. When kayaking, the students use a double blade paddle.



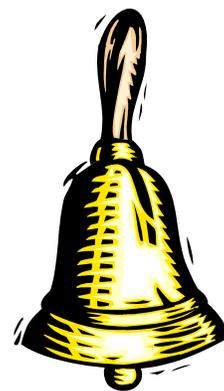
## NEW ATTENDANCE POLICY

California Education Code 48200 provides for compulsory full-time education. Regular, full-time attendance at **CSB** directly supports the individual education plan for each student enrolled here. Parents/guardians/adult students are to call or email the department office before 8:30 a.m. on the day of the absence. Written notes must include the date, reasons for absence, and the parent's signature. School staff examine the reason given for the absence to determine if it is excused or unexcused based on California Education Code definition. If the reason for an absence does not satisfy the Education Code, the absence is considered unexcused. Parents/guardians may not keep students home to babysit, run errands, or for any non-emergency family business. Such absences are unexcused. Medical/dental appointments should be made after school or on the weekend when possible. The school may request a note from medical/dental office when an appointment occurs during school hours.

### Excused Absences

According to Education Code 48205, students may be excused for:

- Personal illness
- Quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer
- Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointments
- Attendance at funeral services for a member of the immediate family
- Jury duty
- Other justifiable reasons with written requests approved by the principal or designee
- Appearance in court
- Attendance at a funeral service for a non-family member
- Observation of a personal religious holiday
- Attendance at religious retreats for no more than four hours per school term
- Employment interviews or conferences
- Illness or medical appointments for a child when the student is a custodial parent
- For DMV or Social Security Administration appointments, permission to miss school must be received from the student's principal. School authorities may excuse any students in grades 7 to 12 from the school for the purpose of obtaining medical services without the consent of the students' parent/guardian. (EC 46010.1)



### Taking Students Out of School

All students are expected to remain at school for the entire day. If a student must leave school for an appointment, the parent/guardian must sign out the student in school office. Students are only released to a parent or legal guardian. If the parent/guardian wishes to have another adult pick up a student, a written signed note is required. If a parent/guardian requests early dismissal, the parent/guardian must contact the department office directly. Students over 18 must receive permission from the principal or designee and sign out in the office. Students who fly between home and school are expected to make return travel arrangements so that they return to school promptly after illness or other excused absence.

## NEW ATTENDANCE POLICY (CONT)

### Truancy

CSVB views truancy as a very serious offense. The school is responsible for the safety and welfare of students. When a student cannot be found, this is a serious safety concern. Consequences for truancy are determined based on the California Department of Education truancy policies.

### Tardiness

Students who are five or more minutes late for school must get a pass from the education office. Students are expected to bring a note from a parent/guardian, dorm counselor, or school staff member explaining the reason for being tardy. Students who are late for class anytime after the 1st period, must get a pass from their teacher or program administrator. Students who do not have a pass will be given an unexcused tardy. If a student is more than 20 minutes tardy to class, it is considered an unexcused absence.

### Excessive Absences

**CSB** considers absenteeism excessive when it interferes with a student's academic performance. Excessive absences include excessive tardies. The school staff become very concerned anytime a student misses five days of school or five class sessions during one term. The school may request a physician's verification of illness for excessive absences. The school informs the Local Educational Agency when a student has excessive absences. (Education Code 48260) Excessive absences may result in a report to the LEA's SARB (School Attendance Review Board.)

## WHO I ADMIRE

By: Noralys C.

The **C**alifornia **S**chool for the **B**lind envisions all students to complete their academic and vocational goals to the best of their ability. The staff member you'll be reading about has and continues to apply this hope to all of his students within the residential part of the campus. He isn't known to do things for publicity, but manages to devote his time to obtain an outstanding work ethic everyone admires. That staff member is Jason Tucker.

Throughout the years I've known Jason, he has presented himself as an intelligent individual who maintains good traits such as kindness and loyalty. For instance, I was assigned to complete a research project before a holiday break. I had written the essay, but needed to make a few corrections. My counselor had left for the evening, so I struggled to get it done. Jason saw my frustration increase and took the initiative to help with the corrections. As grateful as I was, I had felt a huge weight lifted off of my shoulders. The essay turned out to be the best in the class.

Another example is my fear of submitting an article for the Braille Bites. It is the overwhelming fear of not being able to write well. Jason approached me as he saw that I was upset. I'll never forget the exact words he told me. "Never let your weaknesses get in the way of your strengths. Focus on the things you can do instead of the ones you can't." I felt determined to write an article for the Braille Bites after talking with Jason.

In conclusion, Jason is a wonderful role model with a great heart. He still does a lot for me and I'm appreciative of all he has done.

## GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE VISIT



The first week of school for **CSB** was not the first week of school for Kennedy High School so the mainstream students had some free time. We decided to do something fun that didn't cost any money. So we went to San Francisco to walk across the Golden Gate Bridge and then had a picnic lunch in the Shakespeare Rose Garden in Golden Gate Park.

The bridge was extremely busy that day with many people walking and many, many people riding bicycles. Because the sidewalk on the west side of the bridge was closed for repair, the east sidewalk had to accommodate walkers and bike riders. It is not a very wide pathway so it became dangerous at some points. Some of the bike riders were very rude and would not move or slow down for walkers.

Two cargo carriers went under the bridge while we were walking. Even the students with very low vision students were able to see the massive ships as they passed under the bridge.

There is an exposed cable that sticks out from one of the towers. If you put your foot on it, you can feel the bridge vibrate. The bridge also hums and some of the students could hear it.



## WHAT DO THE NEW NUTRITION STANDARDS MEAN FOR SCHOOL FOOD?

By: Suzanne Hemsworth, Supervising Cook II

As **CSB** students and students across the nation return to school, they're finding something new in the cafeteria, healthier school meals shaped by new nutrition standards. This year, the USDA updated the nutrition standards it sets for school meals for the first time in 15 years. What does this mean for **CSB** students? More whole grain foods, increased fruits and vegetables and age appropriate portion sizes. This was made possible through the Healthy, Hunger free Kids Act, championed by the First Lady and signed by President Obama. The new standards align school meals with the latest nutrition science and real world circumstances of America's schools. These responsible reforms do what's right for the children's health in a way that's achievable in school across the nation.

**CSB's** Nutritional service is committed to providing healthy meals and has already implemented several of the recommended guidelines in the past 5 years, well ahead of the timeline. Providing a variety of fresh fruits, a salad bar, whole grain breads and Non-fat, 1% and NF Chocolate milk are already standards in place.

This year, the plate service was changed to tray service in order to offer students a variety of foods when they come into the Dining room. Students make choices as to which meal they want, picking which tray and then settling down to eat and chat with friends. To make these changes successful, parents, school staff and members of the community need to get involved in inspiring and encouraging students to eat healthy both at school and at home. Review school menus, try new foods at home that are on the school menu, and convey the importance of healthy eating to children.



These improvements in school nutrition add up to a substantial investment in the future of our children-and our nation. As President Obama has said "...if we want to win the future...then we have to win the race to educate our kids."

All children should be fueled by the healthiest, most nutritious food we can provide so they can do their best in school.

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