Family Fun
The Aberdeen Area Family Support Group met in December for some fun at the School just prior to the Christmas Program and lunch. They made tactile and braille gift tags for family Christmas gifts. It was fun to see all the creativity come alive.

The parents and grandparents were also shown a new board game from APH called "Game of Squares". Parents were excited to check it out over break and play games with their children.
Everyday Calendar Activities

Children who are visually impaired need to have more hands-on experiences to help them learn. Below are some suggested activities that are simple, inexpensive, and don’t take much time. Activities are taken from everyday events in our lives that are easy to access.

February

Share a cake with neighbors.
Make a tent out of blankets and chairs. What can you pretend while you’re in it?
Blow-dry your hair after a bath.
Find someone who is remodeling their house. Visit and help them.

March

Make gelatin. Watch it go from a powder to a liquid to a solid.
Pay the bills. Help put things in the envelope and lick the flap and put on stamps.
Give a toy away and get a new one.
Buy gum from a machine.

April

What is a garbage disposal? What does it do?
Boil water in a tea kettle that whistles.
Freeze some water in a tray. Look at the ice crystals.
Brush your hair. Clean out the brush.

May

Choose a special drawer. Put your own things in it.
Look at plants coming up in the garden. Perhaps plant some beans.
Look at kitchen or dresser drawers. What is in them?
Compare summer clothing and winter clothing. Put the winter clothes away.

For more ideas or to borrow the complete set of Everyday Activities Calendar, contact your Outreach Vision Consultant. Everyday Activities Calendar is available from APH (American Printing House).

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Video View

"From Russia With Love and Care for Children with Sensory Impairment and Challenging Behaviors: Demonstration of an Intervention Model"

Authors: Dr. Jan Van Dijk, Dr. Catherine Nelson, Dr. Ton Van Der Meer
Produced by The American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH)

This CD-ROM contains an introductory course in Positive Behavioral Support and outlines the basic principles involved in assessing challenging behaviors of children with multiple disabilities. Children from the Children's House for Deaf-blind in Russia are featured in this CD. The introductory course consists of questions to increase your knowledge base, with video clips of the children to support this information. Then the next section of the CD is actually working through the behaviors with each child. There is an initial assessment, then there are targeted behaviors that are noted. A hypothesis is formulated, and interventions are implemented. There are videos along the way of this whole process, making the progress of each child that much more meaningful. If you would like to view this video, just ask to borrow it from your Outreach Vision Consultant.
Transition Tales by Karen Gerety, Transition Specialist

Transition Week 2015
The South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind will host Transition Week June 14-18, 2015 in Sioux Falls. In the last newsletter, I shared a resource called CareerConnect®, a website hosted by the American Foundation for the Blind that gives students an insight into career choices available to people with vision loss. We are so excited to have Joe Strechay, Program Manager for CareerConnect® as one of the speakers for Transition Week this year! Mr. Strechay has experience in all areas of transition planning: employment, postsecondary preparation, vocational rehabilitation, and orientation and mobility, to name a few. You can check out Strechay’s profile at this address: http://www.afb.org/info/about-us/press-room/experts-guide/employment-experts/joe-strechay/12345. I have visited with many of you about Transition Week as an opportunity for your students, and hope most of them can join us this year. I will be in touch directly with you very soon with more details.

Transition Resources
This time I would like to highlight Project Skills, described on the Department of Human Services website: “Project Skills is a paid work experience program for high school students with disabilities in South Dakota. The program is a cooperative arrangement between the state vocational rehabilitation agencies and the local school districts.” (http://dhs.sd.gov/drs/projectskills/default.aspx) In order to participate in Project Skills, a student must be 16 years of age and eligible for services via Service for the Blind and Visually Impaired (or Vocational Rehabilitation for students with other disabilities.) After those criteria are met, the student receives assistance from someone at his/her school in searching for a suitable job site. The employer at the site only has to provide general liability insurance and the state takes care of the rest. This is an amazing, substantial program that is providing students all over South Dakota with work experiences that will help put them on par with their peers. Like many of us who worked when we were teens, students doing Project Skills learn very important “soft skills” on the job - punctuality, attendance, how to negotiate issues with co-workers and supervisors, social skills, and many others - in addition to learning practical work skills that will carry them into their next job. Good stuff! You can learn about Project Skills by following the link above. Feel free to give me a call if you have any questions.

My Own Transition
One last note: I am now doing outreach from a new location. My own transition plan for 2015 included a move to Sioux Falls, where I will work out of an office at the SD School for the Deaf. You can still reach me easily via email: karen.gerety@sdsbvi.northern.edu or by cell phone: 605-216-7965.

Quilts of Valor
The School hosted a Veterans’ Day Program to honor those who have served in the Military. The program included a Presentation of Colors by the Aberdeen C.C. Croal VFW 17 Ladies Auxiliary. Justin Scepaniak (U.S. Marines, U.S. Army Reserve) was the guest speaker; readings were shared by students Jordan Harkless, Jordan Houseman, and Blaine Jemming, and students and staff also sang patriotic songs. Quilts of Valor, under the direction of Jayne Reuer, were presented to six veterans. The quilts are our way to say “thank you” for their service, sacrifice, and valor for our country. Recipients were: TJ Anderson (U.S. Army, US Army Reserve), Jack Heyd (U.S. Army), Vern Rexinger (U.S. Army), Dave Scepaniak (U.S. Army), John Fletcher Quinn (U.S. Navy, U.S. Army Reserve), and Chad Vetter (U.S. Army Reserve).
InSights Art Competition!
The deadlines for the 24th Annual Juried Art Competition and Exhibition for Artists Who Are Visually Impaired or Blind have been established. APH invites visually impaired and blind artists of all ages to submit artwork to APH InSights 2015! This art competition and exhibition is exclusively for blind and visually impaired artists and draws entries from across the U.S. and around the world. Last year we received 315 entries from across the U.S. Again this year, there are two deadlines: Student Preschool through High School must submit a completed entry form along with the original artwork (no digital images) by March 24, 2015. Adults must submit their complete entry package by April 1, 2015. Each artist may submit only one entry.

The competition is open to any person who meets the following definition of blindness: corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye or a visual field limited to 20 degrees or less. This includes those who function at the definition of blindness (FDB), listed above, due to brain injury or dysfunction. There is no limit on the subject or the type of materials that can be used, but the artwork must be original in concept and execution and be completed by the artist, with minimal assistance from others. Updated entry forms and rules will be posted on the website in February. Contact Roberta Williams by email with questions: rwilliams@aph.org.

APH Educational Materials

Match Sticks
This is a game for players with low vision, including those with Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI). It was designed to provide children in the CVI Phases II and III with a matching activity that is fun and entertaining and that helps develop vision skills.

Tactile Clothing Tape
Create braille name labels for the color of an item, laundry instructions, or other information about clothing. The label stays clean, readable and attached through washing, drying, and ironing! It can be removed before putting on the garment and reattached later. Great for those who are in sports and school activities, attending camp, or for anyone who has to identify clothing that becomes mixed with clothing belonging to others.

Sense of Science
Sense of Science is a unique series designed to make the world of science accessible, understandable, and enjoyable. There are 3 different modules: Plants, Animals and Astronomy. Each kit has a set of colorful, raised-line overlays to be used with a light box or as stand-alone items. An accompanying guidebook suggests activities using the overlays and supplemental materials to enhance and extend the learning experience.

These products are available from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) for purchase and can also be borrowed from your area Outreach Vision Consultant. For more information on these products or other APH products, look on their website at http://www.aph.org or contact an Outreach Vision Consultant.
Exploring the Expanded Core Curriculum: Daily Living Skills - Pet Care

Many homes (and some classrooms) have a pet, or maybe even more than one. For your child to learn how to care for a pet is an important independent living skill to learn. It teaches him/her to take care of the needs of someone besides themselves and learn how to organize for that responsibility. First, it is essential for the child to learn the basic skill of giving food and water to the pet: knowing how much and how often. Physical care is also important: learning how to bath the pet, as well as treat it for fleas and ticks is vital. Being able to groom the pet and make sure the pet is wearing a collar with owner information on it is necessary. “Bathing” also needs to be addressed: whether taking the pet outside at regular times and/or setting up a litter box and determining a regular cleaning schedule.

Playing with the pet is important. Allow the student to choose pet toys so he/she will be interested in playing with the pet. And helping your pet exercise is significant: whether that means taking walks, playing with toys, or just chasing each other around. You may need to set up a schedule for the steps involved with the pet’s care, likely a weekly or monthly schedule since some tasks are not done every day. With a pet that is well taken care of, all those involved will enjoy their time together and love each other and love being with each other!

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Books Featuring Characters with Visual Impairments

- *Rainbow Joe and Me* by Maria Diaz Strom
  Eloise likes colors and tells her friend Rainbow Joe how she mixes colors and paints fantastic animals. When Rainbow Joe says he can imagine and mix colors, Eloise wonders how he can do this. Rainbow Joe is blind! Grade Level: K-2

- *Rescue Pup* by Jean Little
  Shakespeare is a Seeing Eye puppy. Before the time comes for him to train with a blind person, he must spend six months with a girl who has never learned to love. He does all he can to teach her, but there are some dangerous situations and by the end of the story he has earned the title Rescue Pup. Grade Level: 3-5

- *From Charlie’s Point of View* by Richard Scrimger
  Charlie Fairmile’s dad has been accused of being the Stocking Bandit, a bank robber. Charlie knows he is innocent, but the police say they have witnesses. Charlie has to find the real criminal and fast. With the help of his best friends, Charlie sets out to solve the mystery. But can a blind teenager unravel the crime and save his father? Grade Level: 4-7

- *Let’s Start Baking* by Amy Scepaniak, Outreach Vision Consultant
  Often times it only takes a little creativity to make a great product. This summer Ken Doctor, a Rehab Teacher at the North Dakota School for the Blind, presented on “daily living skills” during our Family Weekend. One of the items he demonstrated was child-sized oven mitts. Everyone thought this was a great idea because most oven mitts are large and made for adult hands. One day when I was visiting one of my students at Brentwood Colony near Faulkton, SD I shared the idea of making child-sized oven mitts with Judith Wurtz and her daughter Leanne, who is visually impaired from albinism, knowing that both are very crafty people and may be interested in trying to make them. A huge thanks also goes out to Michelle Latt from Faulkton who graciously donated the materials to make the oven mitts.

  Pictured are SDDBVI students showing off the newly designed oven mitts which were recently delivered to our school by Judith and Leanne.
Incidental Learning or “Learning Outside of the Box”

Incidental learning is learning that takes place without any structure, objective, or intent to learn, and is usually done by visually observing. This method of learning is very difficult for children who are blind or visually impaired, and concepts need to be taught through hands-on learning experiences.

A really fun hands-on experience to do with students is to explore various kinds of uniforms that are out in the community. You will want to explore the uniform pieces from head to toe. Many uniforms include a hat or headgear of some sort. Then there is the shirt, coat, and pants of the uniform. And the shoes and/or boots are really fun to investigate! Also, some uniforms may have additional “accessories” (stethoscope, mailbag). If possible, allow your student to try on as much of the uniform as possible, even if it is too big; letting them try on the uniform is an unforgettable experience.

Examples of uniforms include:
- Doctor
- Nurse
- Police Officer
- Sports Teams
- Mail Delivery Personnel
- Fire Fighter
- Waiter or Waitress
- Cheerleader
- Boy Scout or Girl Scout
- Clergy
- Military

And don’t forget to take pictures with the student wearing the uniforms…even make an experience book of the pictures and statements from the student about each uniform. It will be something they won’t forget! Students can take field trips to see where and how these uniforms are used by the professionals. Storybooks and activities can also be implemented into the classroom or at home.

U.S. Currency Reader Program

As an interim measure in advance of issuing tactile-enhanced Federal Reserve notes, the BEP is providing currency readers, free of charge, to eligible blind and visually impaired individuals.

The U.S. Currency Reader Program was launched in two phases:

- **Pilot:** From September 2, 2014 to December 31, 2014, in partnership with the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Library of Congress (NLS), the BEP conducted a four-month pilot where NLS patrons could pre-order a currency reader, the iBill. The pilot program allowed the government to test its ordering and distribution processes and gauge demand for currency readers. Approximately 12,000 NLS patrons pre-ordered a currency reader during the pilot phase.

- **National Rollout:** Currency readers became widely available to all U.S. citizens, or persons legally residing in the U.S. who are blind or visually impaired, on January 2, 2015. Individuals interested in receiving a currency reader through the U.S. Currency Reader Program must submit an application, signed by a competent authority who can certify eligibility.

Contact Us: For additional questions or comments about the U.S. Currency Reader Program, you may call (844) 815-9388 toll-free or email meaningful.access@bep.gov.
Staci Mannella was the youngest member of the US Paralympic Team at the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. Born with achromatopsia, Staci’s vision is limited to objects about three feet away, and even those objects aren’t seen clearly. While her color-blindness isn’t as pronounced as other achromats, she is quite photophobic, squinting and blinking in the sunlight. This, however, doesn’t stop her conquering the world of adaptive alpine skiing.

Her career thus far includes four national championship titles, a World Cup gold medal, and the opportunity to represent the United States in the 2014 Sochi Paralympic Games. Her next goal? This rising star intends to drive forward in hopes of competing and medaling in the 2018 Pyeong Chang Paralympic Games.

To learn more about Staci and Paralympics check out the following links: http://stacimannella.com/, www.paralympic.org/, or follow Staci on Facebook.
2015 Dakotas AER Conference - “Embracing Change”

The 2015 AER Conference will be held May 13-15, 2015 at the North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind in Grand Forks, ND. This conference features topics of interest to parents and professionals in the field of vision and other related disciplines.

**Featured Presenters and Topics Include:**

- Dona Sauerburger - Orientation and Mobility Specialist from Maryland
- Maria Delgado - American Printing House for the Blind, Kentucky
- Assessments, Technology, Social Skills, Orientation & Mobility, and Technology
- Unified English Braille (UEB)
- Trends in Eye Care and Dual Sensory Loss

We welcome and encourage Parents, Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Rehabilitation Therapists, and anyone working or interested in the field of vision to attend this conference.

A block of rooms has been set aside at the Howard Johnson Inn, call (701) 772-7131 to make reservation under NDVS/SB by April 10, 2015. Registration and Conference information are available at [www.ndvisionservices.com](http://www.ndvisionservices.com) or contact Paul H. Olson at (701)795-2700 or polson@nd.gov for more information.

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Football Fun Marshmallow Treats: Just in Time for the Super Bowl

Score a touchdown with your little football player with these traditional treats with a twist!

**What you need**

- 6 cups KELLOGG'S COCOA KRISPIES® Cereal
- 3 TBSP butter or margarine
- 1 package regular marshmallows (10 oz., about 40)
- White decorator’s icing in a tube
- Wax paper
- 13 x 9 cookie sheet

**Directions:**

Melt butter in a large saucepan over low heat and then add marshmallows and stir until melted. Remove from heat. Add KELLOGG'S COCOA KRISPIES® Cereal and stir. Allow mixture to completely cool. Cover 13 x 9 cookie sheet with wax paper. After cereal mixture is completely cooled, take a fistful of the mixture and mold into the shape of a football. Place on wax paper. Repeat step until all the mixture is gone. Using white decorator’s frosting, decorate the treat like a football. Place treats into airtight container until you are ready to serve. Makes 20 - 24

If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.

By Napoleon Hill
FOCUS ON THE EYE  REFRACTION AND REFRACTIVE ERRORS
(Myopia / Hyperopia / Astigmatism / Anisometropia)

DESCRIPTION:
Refraction is a vision test that determines your best visual acuity with corrective lenses. It can be done with computerized equipment, but typically an instrument called a phoropter is used. The phoropter holds corrective lenses that are positioned in front of your eye. While looking at the eye chart through the phoropter, the technician or doctor will adjust the lenses until the chart appears the clearest possible. A refractive error, or refraction error, is an error in the focusing of light by the eye and a frequent reason for reduced visual acuity and/or blurry vision.

TYPES OF REFRACTIVE ERRORS: There are 4 basic types of refractive errors:

 שו Myopia (nearsightedness) – This is a condition where the distance vision is blurred, but a child can usually see well for reading or other near tasks. This occurs most often in school-age children, although occasionally younger children can be affected. The prescription for glasses will indicate a minus sign before the prescription (for example: -2.00).

 שו Hyperopia (farsightedness) – Most children are farsighted early in life (this is normal!) and need no treatment for this because they can use their own focusing muscles to provide clear vision for both distance and near vision. Glasses are rarely needed if the far-sightedness is less than +1.00 or even +2.00. When an excessive amount of farsightedness is present, the focusing muscles may not be able to keep the vision clear. As a result of this, problems such as crossing of the eyes, blurred vision, or discomfort may develop. A prescription for hyperopia will be preceded by a plus sign.

 שו Astigmatism – Astigmatism is caused by a difference in the surface curve of the eye. Instead of being shaped like a perfect sphere (like a basketball), the eye is shaped with a greater curve in one axis (like a football). If a child has a significant astigmatism, fine details may look blurred or distorted. Glasses that are prescribed for astigmatism have greater strength in one direction of the lens than in the opposite direction.

 שו Anisometropia – Some children may have a different prescription in each eye. This can create a condition called amblyopia, where the vision in one eye does not develop normally. Glasses (and sometimes patching) are needed to insure that each eye can see clearly.

CAUSES: Refractive errors are thought to occur due to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Trauma or some ocular disorders may also cause refractive errors.

TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT: How refractive errors are treated or managed depends upon the amount and severity of the condition. Those who possess mild amounts of refractive error may elect to leave the condition uncorrected, particularly if it does not interfere with everyday functioning. For those who have greater amounts of refractive error, glasses, contact lenses, refractive surgery, or a combination of the preceding three, may be used.

TESTING A CHILD FOR GLASSES: By doing a complete eye examination, an ophthalmologist or optometrist can detect the need for glasses, even in very young children. Typically, the pupils are dilated in order to relax the focusing muscles, so that an accurate measurement of the error of refraction can be obtained. By using a special instrument, called a retinoscope, your eye doctor can arrive at an accurate prescription. The eye care specialist will then advise parents whether the measured error of refraction is appropriate or expected for his or her age, whether there is a need for glasses, or whether the condition can just be monitored.

SOURCES
www.mayoclinic.com  www.preventblindness.org
www.aoa.org
Winter Story Box  

**All You Need for a Snowman** by Alice Schertle

Are you looking for a fun way to brighten up the cold winter days? *All You Need for a Snowman* (print and braille) by Alice Schertle and illustrated by Barbara Lavallee is a wonderful book to read aloud and it lends itself especially well to being made into a Story Box. For those of you who don’t know, Story Boxes are a way to bring books to life for young children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities. Instead of relying on illustrations to support the story, Story Boxes use real objects and tangible symbols to help to make the meaning clear. As the story is told, children can feel the items described in the story and also reinforce other concepts such as counting and size.

**Materials:**
- Items mentioned in the story (carrot, bottle caps, a scarf, mittens, walnuts, and a fanny pack)
- A box in which to store the items
- Accessible label for the Story Box (with braille, large print, or a tactile symbol)

**Procedure:**
- Gather all items needed for the story and create a Story Box.
- Read the story aloud and invite each child to examine the item mentioned in the story as it appears.
- Ask children to take turns reaching into the Story Box and finding the item that is mentioned.
- Talk about how to use each item.
- Make a snowman out of play dough or clay and practice making balls of different sizes.

**Variations:**
- Make snowflakes out of clay, paper, or flannel and count them.
- Bring in some real snow, if possible, and make it into snowballs of different sizes.

**Core Standards**

Literature:
- RL.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
- RL.K.2 With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.
- RL.K.4 Ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text.

**For more ideas:** check out the following link:

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Follow SD School for Blind and Visually Impaired

**Website:** http://sdsbvi.northern.edu  
**Pinterest:** http://pinterest.com/sdsbvi  
**Facebook:** SD School for Blind and Visually Impaired
Shaving Cream & Cornstarch Snowman

Materials:
- Shaving cream
- Cornstarch
- Food coloring (optional)
- Bowls
- Small twigs
- Plastic wiggly eyes
- Small discs or buttons
- Felt or paper for mouth

Directions:
Step 1: Just pour any amount of cornstarch and squirt about the same amount of shaving cream on top of the cornstarch. You can add more of either if you need to as you mix it until you get a moldable dough. Then just mix it by squishing it with your fingers! You can also add some food coloring if you want to add some color.
Step 2: Roll 3 different sized balls and stack with the smallest on top and the largest on the bottom.
Step 3: Add eyes, nose, mouth, arms, and buttons.


Consultants' Contact Information

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Summer Fun & Learning

Summer is a great time for learning. Students with vision loss have an opportunity to acquire skills that will increase their independence and self-confidence. Our Summer Program is designed to offer hands-on activities on the campus in Aberdeen and in the surrounding community to develop the skills of blindness. Since many students do not have opportunities for this instruction in their home communities, summer is an ideal time to learn from teachers of the visually impaired.

The Summer Program is usually added to a student’s IEP under Extended School Year. If you would like more information, please ask your Outreach Vision Consultant.