



February 1, 2007

Low Vision Clinic a Success!

By Melody Zagami, ECP, NMSBVI



The New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Department of Outreach Services held New Mexico's first ever Low Vision Clinic in November. Twelve students came to the clinic, which was held at The Eye Site in Artesia. Students, their families, and their Teachers for the Visually Impaired traveled from all over the state to participate in this landmark event. NMSBVI Outreach staff and Early Childhood Program staff contributed to the clinic, as did Doctors Kendra Powell from Artesia and Dr. Kara Hanson from Colorado.

The Low Vision Clinic was monumental, in that, it worked toward a synthesis of the student's education and his or her medical diagnoses, meeting at a point in the middle where the student can find and use low vision devices that are most appropriate for him or her.

The appointments took anywhere from two to three and a half hours; the students receiving a series of clinical vision evaluations. During the clinical vision evaluations, students, their teachers and families were able to test out various kinds of high and low tech equipment to see what might work best for them.



The team from the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired was also joined by Linda Belyeu-Conklin who is a representative of Low Vision Devices and a former educator. Belyeu-Conklin introduced and trained attendees on Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs), electronic magnifiers, and other equipment.



Overall, the clinic was a success for all those that attended and worked to create a strong foundation for Low Vision Clinics in the future for the state of New Mexico.

Encompassing the Visual Field New Mexico AER State Conference

Best Western Rio Rancho Inn & Conference Center

1465 Rio Rancho Blvd., Rio Rancho, NM 87124

For Hotel Reservations (505) 892-1700

For conference registration: tmosbarger@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us

Day One

Key Note Speaker: Dr. Sandra Ruconich, Director of the Utah School for the Blind's central division and President of AER; Success in the Package of a Woman who is Visually Impaired

Teaching Persons who are Deaf-Blind; (full day)
Dr. Bernadette Wynne, MA, HKNC

Making Your Own Personal Low Vision Simulators;
Janice Duseau, NMSU

Getting Over the Math Humps;
Caroline Rounds, TVI

Using the Little Room for Multiply Impaired Children
Linda Jordan; TVI/COMS, Outreach, NMSBVI

Moving in Space-Zach's Story;
Rebecca Steritz, COMS

Sensory Basics for Students with Vision Impairment or Blindness; Sarah Picchiarini, MOTR/L

Three C's to Greater Independence;
Jay Stiteley, MS, Seeing Eye, Inc.

Transition: Tools to Help the Cane Traveler
Become a Dog Guide Handler - How O&Ms
Can Help
Lukas Franck, COMS; Seeing Eye, Inc.

Tech Training Near and Far, When, Where, and How;
Brian Charlson, VP, Carroll Center for the Blind

Using APH materials in the Classroom; Sandy Baker;
American Printing House for the Blind

Self Help Support Groups: Their Development and
Improvement; Don Golembiewski, Hadley

The Wonderful World of Braille
Caroline Rounds, Board member/NMSBVI

Low Vision: What's It All About?
Joe Buttazzoni, Eschenbach Optic of America

How Can the Professional Worker with VI Individuals
Utilize the Services of Hadley?; Don Golembiewski

Experiencing the NFB Space Camp;
William Casson, Jr.
A HS student who attended the camp - 2006

Day Two

Key Note Speaker: The Low Vision Examination
Kara Hanson, OD, FFAO; specializes in Low Vision

Orientation & Mobility for Persons Who are Deaf
Blind (full day); Dr. Bernadette Wynne, MA; HKNC

The Primary Care Eye Examination (Advantages &
Disadvantages of Optical Devices, Dr. Kara Hanson

What to Expect at a NMSBVI Access to Learning
Low Vision Clinic; Tracy Mosbarger Coordinator
for the NMSBVI Low Vision Clinic

ViSioN Program: Vision Skills in the Natural
Environment; Judi Nielen and Barbara Petersen,
Judy is the director of the Parent Infant Program at
the Utah Schools for the Deaf and the Blind

TVI Interest Group; Facilitated

Preschool Early Literacy; Suzette Wright, American
Printing House for the Blind

Structured Discovery Teaching Method
Eric Woods, COMS; Colorado Center for the Blind
and the New Mexico Commission for the Blind

Low Vision and Guide Dogs: How Much is Too
Much; Renee Abernathy, CLVS and Mike Meyer,
COMS/TVI; Guiding Eyes for the Blind

Orienteering for COMS; Michael Hayes, TVI/COMS

Basic Tactile Graphics (Make It Take It); Patricia
Stevenson & Louise Dominguez, Literary Braille
Transcriptionists, NMSBVI

Learning to Use the Braille Note; Sandy Ruconich

Mentoring and Mentorship;
Sherri Lyle, TVI/COMS, MA SpEd, MA EDL,
Outreach/NMSBVI

Making an AMD and a Bundu Basher;
Janice Duseau, NMSU

Technology Presentations; Vendors
Both days

Literacy Sources

Net.Library offers more than 95,000 e-books titles in subjects such as arts, business, history, literature, religion, science and technology to academic, public and corporate libraries that purchase a collection of titles. Patrons must create an account with an affiliated library in order to access the collection. Books are in a proprietary e-book format.

The **Online Books Page** provides a searchable database of links to more than 25,000 titles available online at no charge and in non-proprietary format. Has a listing of foreign language and literature resources and an archive of serials.

Project Gutenberg offers over 17,000 titles available in the public domain, including children's books. Most books are in text or HTML format. Foreign language texts, audio books, recorded music and sheet music are also available.

Questia has an enormous collection of scholarly books, newspaper, magazine and journal articles in the humanities and social sciences selected by professional collection development librarians. Uses dynamic HTML and JavaScript. Offers a range of subscription plans from monthly at \$19.95 to quarterly at \$44.95 to annual at \$99.95.

Tiflolibros: E-Books for the Blind has more than five thousand digital books in Spanish that can be downloaded; includes a small but growing number of books in English, German, French, Italian and Portuguese. Registration required for a password to access the collection.

The **Braille Institute** offers several free subscription programs; The Braille Mirror-a collection of feature and news articles; Wall Calendar-available in large print and Braille; The Braille Special Collection-preschool through high school (order up to four books at a time); Expectations-an annual anthology of contemporary children's literature for kids 7-12; Brailleways-another children's anthology for kid's ages

Braille Art

New Mexico
By Daniella Ortiz
Age 14

When you read a letter or word following a comma it needs to be Brailled, for example: "Space 7, th" indicates that you need to skip 7 cells and Braille the contraction "th"

p, l, v, z

th = dot 1, 4, 5, 6

hyphen = dot 3, 6,

number indicator = dot 3, 4, 5, 6

1. Skip 2 lines, space 2, p, 18 c's, th
2. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
3. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
4. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
5. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
6. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
7. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
8. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
9. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
10. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
11. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
12. Space 2, l, space 18, 4-5-6
13. Space 2, l, space 8, 10 hyphens, number indicator
14. Space 2, l, space 4, 3 hyphens, z
15. Space 2, l, space 4, dot 4-5-6
16. Space 2, v, 4 hyphens, number indicator

Upcoming Learning Opportunities

Dear Prospective STEP Participants and Parents:

At this time we are actively recruiting and accepting applications for the Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP), our summer youth employment and training program. We are planning to serve 30 youth, ages 14-21, and applications are being accepted with the release of this letter on a **first come/first served basis**. The program is seven weeks in duration, **June 4 - June 29, and July 9 - July 27**, with a vacation period from June 30 - July 8. Parents are asked to plan family vacations during this scheduled break or after the program is over.

The STEP program offers students an opportunity to gain paid work experience and training in the skills that they will need to be successful in the workplace. First year STEP students are required to attend the program in Alamogordo. Fifteen students, maximum, will be housed at our dormitory at the Orientation Center. Students will work part of the week and attend classes in mobility, technology, personal management, Braille, and home management during the remainder of the week. Training is individualized based upon the student's needs. The Albuquerque program is operated in a very similar fashion to the program in Alamogordo, with the exception that students reside in their home and use public transportation to travel between their home, work, and classes at the Commission office at 2200 Yale S.E.

Most of the skills training will take place under blindfold and a strong focus of the training will be mobility. Mandatory activities, a critical training component of the program, can include swimming, horseback riding, rock climbing, hiking, etc. We know that these experiences are vital in the development of confidence and self esteem. Written parental permission for participation in these activities is required for admission to the program.

A community-based option is available in addition to the Alamogordo and Albuquerque programs described above. This option is available to accommodate students that require the additional support of their family due to a severe disability. In this situation, we extend the STEP program to their home community, arrange a work experience, and provide a job coach (as needed). This option is also available to students that have demonstrated a high level of competence, personal responsibility, and an excellent work ethic in our Alamogordo program. This option enables students approaching adulthood to begin to integrate into their communities both vocationally and socially. In all three settings students are paid for up to 25 hours per week.

Applications must be received by February 16, although applicants run the risk of not getting a slot if they wait until this deadline to submit an application.

Following receipt of completed applications, meetings will be scheduled with individual students and their parents to determine program placements, with final placement decisions made by mid-April.

I am looking forward to meeting you soon and hope to be able to answer any of your questions about the STEP program. Please feel free to contact me anytime with any questions or concerns that you may have. I can be reached in Alamogordo at 505-437-0401, toll free 1-888-513-7967, and by [email at Gail.Melpolder@state.nm.us](mailto:Gail.Melpolder@state.nm.us).

Sincerely,

Gail Melpolder, M.S., CRC
STEP Program Coordinator
New Mexico Commission for the Blind,
408 N. White Sands Blvd., Alamogordo, NM 88310

New U.S. Bills: Blind Justice?

By Roger Parloff, Fortune senior editor
Fortune Magazine
January 11, 2007

In late November, when a federal district judge ruled that American greenbacks violate the federal Rehabilitation Act because the various denominations are not readily distinguishable by blind people, the American Council of the Blind scored a stunning victory.

Since 1983, the advocacy group has been urging U.S. Treasury officials to make paper money easier for the blind to use. Blind people typically determine the denominations of paper money by using bill-reading machines or by asking sighted people a bill's value and then folding the various denominations in different ways.

In 2002 the ACB finally sued, and on Nov. 28 Judge James Robertson of Washington, D.C., ruled that if blind people "cannot accurately identify paper money without assistance" they are being illegally denied "meaningful access" to the currency in violation of the law.

It might have seemed like an occasion for celebration by all blind Americans, but instead the decision illuminated a major philosophical division within the visually impaired community.

Shortly afterward, the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) - an advocacy group with an agenda distinct from that of the American Council of the Blind - denounced the judge's ruling as "dangerously misguided" and pledged to support the Treasury's appeal of it. The NFB's president, Dr. Marc Maurer, issued a statement arguing that "blind people transact business with paper money every day" and don't need "feel-good gimmicks that misinform the public about our capabilities."

The NFB's fear is that special treatment may hurt the chances of blind people being taken seriously by businesses. "An employer who believes that every piece of printed material in the workplace must be specially designed so that the blind can read it will have a strong incentive not to hire a blind person," adds Maurer. Headquartered at the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore, the NFB maintains that it is the oldest and largest organization of blind persons in America, with 50,000 members. (The Las Vegas-based ACB claims about 40,000.)

Paper currency isn't the only flashpoint. The NFB also opposes the ACB's initiative to get legislation passed that would require adoption of "video description" technologies that give blind viewers the option of hearing voice-overs explaining the visuals on TV and movies.

Says NFB spokesperson John Paré: "Our focus is on education and working, not sitting at home and watching TV." The ACB spokesman, Day Al-Mohamed, counters that video descriptions provide access to emergency messages that are often delivered via crawls at the bottom of the TV screen.

The rift cannot be reduced to enablers vs. tough-lovers, for the NFB will litigate when it believes accessibility is being denied to something more essential. Last March it sued Target for allegedly failing to make its Web site accessible to the blind.

The NFB won an important preliminary ruling in the Target case in September, when U.S. District Judge Marilyn Hall Patel of San Francisco rejected Target's contention that the Americans with Disabilities Act - which forbids discrimination at "any place of public accommodation" - applies only to physical facilities. A Target spokesperson declined an interview, but referred Fortune to a statement it issued in October: "We are in the process of making online enhancements that will benefit all of our guests, including those with disabilities. These enhancements will occur regardless of the outcome of this lawsuit."

There's no question that changing the U.S. currency would cost more than fixing a Web site. The most expensive option - adopting different-sized bills for different denominations - would require an initial investment of about \$215 million to \$228 million for new presses and plates, according to the Treasury.

But against the background of a \$4.2 billion budget over the past ten years (encompassing major currency redesigns in 1996 and 2004), Judge Robertson ruled that such costs would not constitute an undue burden. He also observed that of the 180 nations using paper currency today, the U.S. is the only one currently taking no steps to make denominations legible to the blind.

Conferences

Many conferences offer stipends to help families attend conferences so don't be afraid to call for more information.

**February 1-3, 2007, San Francisco, CA
Technology, Reading, and Learning Diversity**

Topics to include; digital age thinking, online reading comprehension, universal design for learning, literacy integration through technology, technology supported comprehension strategies, word prediction programs, high order cognition, and IDEA 2004 - Uses of Technology

For more information visit: www.trld.com/index.htm

**March 13, 2007; Live Teleconference, NM
The Difficult and Disruptive Student**

Teachers of regular education and special education report that next to finances, the number one biggest problem they face is discipline. The challenges of the difficult and disruptive student often interfere with the learning of typically developing students and also contribute to a negative learning climate. This teleconference will provide you with a better understanding of who these learners are, how to identify them and, most importantly, the practical strategies that can be used immediately to increase more appropriate behaviors and reduce challenging behaviors. Early Bird special \$79 per site; unlimited listeners per connection. For more information visit:

www.lorman-seminars.com

**March 8-10, 2007, Boston, MA
4th International Conference on
Positive Behavior Support**

The Expanding World of PBS: Science, Values, and Vision. For more information visit:

www.apbs.org/conference/Default.aspx

**March 16, 2007, Albuquerque, NM
Disciplining Special Needs Students in New Mexico**

The discipline of students with special needs is governed by a complex set of federal and state laws and regulations that impose numerous legal requirements on school districts. These requirements apply both at the time disciplinary action is called for and before disciplinary action becomes necessary. This course will include a discussion of the significant changes in the reauthorized IDEA, which was signed into law on December 3, 2004. For more information visit:

www.lorman-seminars.com

**March 19-24, 2007; Los Angeles, CA
21st Annual Technology & Persons with
Disability Conf.**

For more information visit:

<http://www.csun.edu/cod>

**March 23-24, 2007, Dallas, Texas
The 2007 Josephine L. Taylor Leadership
Institute (JLTLI)**

For more information visit www.afb.org

**July 13-15, 2007; Omaha, NE
Families Connecting with Families**

National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, American Foundation for the Blind, and the Seeing Eye

For more information visit:

www.afb.org/Community.asp?EventID=795

**September 25-30, 2007, Perth, Australia
14th Deafblind International
World Conference**

Early bird registration ends March 31, 2007

For more information visit:

www.dbiconference2007.asn.au/

Would You Like to Be On the Tid Bits Mailing List?

Name _____ Title/Organization _____

Address _____

Attention: Sherri Lyle • NMSBVI • PO BOX 5165 • Silver City • NM • 88062

FAX (505) 534-1310 • slyle@nmsbvi.k12.nm.us

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