

A Note From The DSB Child and Family Staff

About Blind Children...ABC. Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) is reviving our newsletter for families of blind/visually impaired children, after a four year hiatus. Those readers affiliated with DSB in 2009 may remember the Child & Family program. We have continued to serve the Birth-13 year old children and their extended families in an innovative way, all along. Due to limited resources, the newsletter became dormant. Not anymore! We ARE baaaaack!

For our new-to-DSB families, our newsletter previously was printed and postal mailed to children and parents. This was quite an expense and we would rather divert those expenses toward offering more services and programs to blind children. Our newsletter is now offered electronically and on the DSB website. If you have suggestions for topics, features, and/or wish to add someone to our e-mailing list, please let us know.

In this newsletter, we offer:

- ♦ Winter holiday gift suggestions for blind children
- ♦ Inclusion in holiday activities
- ♦ Informative websites
- ♦ Upcoming programs
- ♦ DSB Staff for Birth-13

Winter Reading List

By: Mandy Gonnens, Youth Services Librarian, Washington Talking Book & Braille Library



Season's Greetings from the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL)! WTBBL is a free library service offered to all eligible residents of Washington who are blind, visually impaired, physically disabled, or learning disabled [<http://www.wtbbl.org>]. Our wide collection includes Braille, print/Braille, audio, and large print books for children, teens, and adults. We also have an extensive downloadable collection for audio and Braille books.

During this holiday season, take a moment to read with your child! Young children who read books at home can practice building their literacy & reading skills outside of school. Older children and teens can explore new interests and different types of books, therefore reading becomes a personalized and enjoyable experience. This translates into reading more as a leisure activity and being a life-long reader.

Try audiobooks while traveling this month. Reading audiobooks is an activity in which the whole family can participate. For younger children, sharing a book in the evening or at bedtime can make for a fun winter tradition. Try setting a designated family reading time with your tween or teen and grab a book of your own to read. Reading independently while sitting together is a great way to spend some quality and quiet moments together, and reinforce that reading is a lifelong activity.

There are so many wonderful winter and holiday stories, but I wanted to share a few of my favorites for children and teens! Look for these titles at WTBBL or your local library (WTBBL book numbers listed in brackets next to titles).

Happy Reading!

For Young Readers (Toddler- Grade 1)

- ◆ Snowflake Bentley by Jacqueline Briggs Martin [BR 12032]: Curious about science in nature and particularly snowflakes, Wilson Bentley taught himself how to photograph nature's small and delicate details.
- ◆ The Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg [BR012001; DB023625]: On a dark Christmas Eve, a boy who believes in Santa Claus boards a mysterious train. The Polar Express whisks the boy and other children across a snowy landscape into the huge city of the North Pole.
- ◆ How the Grinch Stole Christmas by Dr. Seuss [BR016316; DB047536; DB072998]: The Grinch, whose heart is two sizes too small, tries to abolish Christmas by stealing all the presents from Whoville.



For Elementary Readers (Grade 2- Grade 6)

- ◆ Winter of the Ice Wizard, #32 Magic Tree House by Mary Pope Osborne [BR015745; DB059444]: Jack and Annie travel with Teddy and Kathleen to the snowy Land-Behind-the-Clouds to retrieve Merlin's Staff of Strength. But, the Ice Wizard has already captured Merlin, Morgan, and the staff.
- ◆ Candlelight for Rebecca: An American Girl, 1914 by Jacqueline Dembar Greene [DB071078; BR018669]: As Hanukkah approaches, Rebecca worries about taking home the Christmas centerpiece her teacher insists that each student make.
- ◆ Kringle by Tony Abbott: In a world of goblins, flying reindeer, and elves, one orphan must fight these violent and dark forces to save the world's children from an evil fate.
- ◆ The Long Winter- Little House on the Prairie by Laura Ingalls Wilder [DB 21198; BR011325]: Despite a move from the Dakota prairie to their store in town, the Ingalls family faces a severe winter as one blizzard follows another, shutting down train service and isolating the town.
- ◆ The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson [BR 16320; DB 38118]: When the awful Herdman family hears about the free refreshments at Sunday school, the family not only shows up, but also muscles their way into the lead roles of the annual Christmas pageant.
- ◆ Breadcrumbs by Anne Ursu:
Once upon a time, Hazel and Jack were best friends. But Jack disappeared into a snowy forest with a mysterious woman made of ice. Now it's up to Hazel to find him and bring him home.

For Older Readers (Grade 7 & up)

- ◆ The Winter Room by Gary Paulsen [BR 08380]: Eleven-year old Eldon passes the long winter between farming seasons by listening to his Uncle David's stories. But Eldon soon learns that, although he has lived on the same farm, in the same house with his uncle for eleven springs, summers, and winters, he hardly knows him.



- ◆ Let it Snow- Three Holiday Romances by John Green, Lauren Myracle, and Maureen Johnson [DB 68582]: An unexpected snowstorm in a small Southern town brings the magic of holiday romance to three teens in these three interconnected novellas.

Medicaid is now Washington Apple Health

(Official information from the Washington State Health Care Authority)

Big changes are in store for health insurance coverage in Washington. Because of the Affordable Care Act (also known as Obamacare), more people will be able to get preventative care, like check-ups and cancer screenings, treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure and many other health care services they need to stay healthy.

And, the name of Medicaid is changing, too. It is now called Apple Health.

You may have already heard of Apple Health for Kids. A while back, all of the children's health services were combined into one program that's streamlined and easy to remember—Apple Health for Kids.

Well, Apple Health for adults is the same idea. Adult Medicaid clients will gradually be combined under the Apple Health umbrella.

How to apply

Beginning October 1, 2013, you can apply for Apple Health on any computer with an internet connection at Washington Healthplanfinder: www.wahealthplanfinder.org

Don't be fooled by scams!

Only www.wahealthplanfinder.org is the official state health insurance exchange. Look-alike websites with similar names or web addresses are NOT the same!

When you're ready to apply, you'll need this information:

- ◆ Your household monthly income
- ◆ Social Security Numbers and dates of birth for each member of your household
- ◆ Your immigration information, if that applies to you

It will take about 45 minutes to apply online—and you'll get a response RIGHT AWAY.

If you're accepted, your Apple Health coverage will start on January 1, 2014. (Beginning October 1, for new applicants for children, pregnant women and family medical Medicaid/Apple Health programs, coverage will begin on the first day of the month in which the application was submitted.)

If you're not eligible for Apple Health, you may qualify for help with your health insurance or for other health services. The website can help you with this, too.



Resources for Parents of Blind & Disabled Babies & Children

Wonder Baby: <http://www.wonderbaby.org>

WonderBaby.org, a project funded by [Perkins School for the Blind](http://www.perkins.edu), is dedicated to helping parents of young children with visual impairments as well as children with multiple disabilities. Here you'll find a database of articles written by parents who want to share with others what they've learned about playing with and teaching a blind child, as well as links to meaningful resources and ways to connect with other families.



Gifts For Our Little Ones

By Diane McCutchen, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

This time of year the question always comes up of what to buy the children or grandchildren for the holidays. This is particularly difficult for parents and grandparents of children with visual impairments. I think the joy of the holidays comes with sharing, giving, getting and of course unwrapping. For toddlers, unwrapping is often the most fun. Here are some thoughts to help make the gift giving portion of the holidays interesting for our little ones with a visual impairment.

Most toys now days seem to have all the bells and whistles combined in one toy....music, color, lights, and sirens. I find that this is too overwhelming for little ones. . Plus the texture is only plastic. Not very inspiring. They are ready to explore. That means touch, push, pull, put in, take out, bang....whatever allows them to discover the object they are handling. If we give toys that only require the push of a button to activate we are limiting kiddos' exploration abilities....the different strategies and problem solvers they have to come up with themselves to make something work. Kitchen and bath objects are great gifts. Aluminum bowls, whisks, measuring cups, measuring spoons, wooden spoons, loofas, netting sponges, bath bubbles that smell good, sticky decals to put on the tub. What fun to wrap each individually so they can be unwrapped and placed in their new bowl or bath basket.



For the older children three four and five years old, how about a purse with real keys, sunglasses, chap stick, small packet of Kleenex. These kiddos are often ready to imitate mom and dad. For dad imitation, how about a tool kit with play hammer, screwdriver, and nuts and bolts to put together. Or perhaps dad or mom likes to cook. An apron with different textures on the pockets that hold a stirring spoon, measuring spoons, spatula to lick when helping make cookies.

Books are also a wonderful gift. Seedlings.com and other websites provide both Braille and print books suitable for our younger kids.

Now about wrapping paper. Never underestimate the value of the reflective paper and shiny bows we use during the holidays. The crinkly sounds of unwrapping, the stickiness of the bows attached to the paper, the feel of the different ribbons used to wrap the gifts are all an experience in itself.

All in all it's about being together, enjoying the holidays, and above all realizing our little ones are often overwhelmed by the holidays (as we are). Take time to do something peaceful so everyone can find their sense of balance again and continue the joy.

Toys and Activities for the Holidays

By: Janet George



The holiday season is very exciting for children. They visit with family members some of whom they haven't seen in a long while. They anticipate the gift giving season. "mom I want ... !" is often heard around the house. They may want to participate in the school's holiday programs. The child with a vision impairment is no less excited about the Holiday celebration. Mom and Dad are already hearing from family the question "What can I give grandchild, my niece, my nephew? What does a child with a vision impairment play with? What can I buy?" This article will suggest a

couple of ideas for toys excellent for children with no vision or low vision. It will also recommend a couple of holiday activities for vision impaired children during the holiday season.

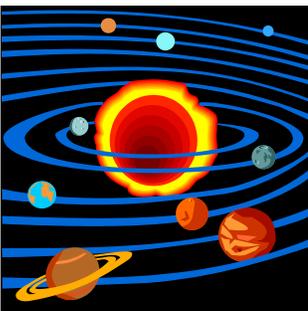
A visit to the toy aisle at the store is totally overwhelming. There are the traditional toys: balls, dump trucks, hot wheel cars, dolls. Then there are electronic toys, digital toys and traditional toys that have been digitally or electronically enhanced. A parent of a child with a visual impairment may well be asking themselves, What can I get my child that she will learn from and enjoy? Wonderbaby.org has a toy article on their site with lots of suggestions. Here are just a few:

For babies:

- ◆ [Lamaze Eddie the Elephant Tunes](#)
- ◆ [Vtech Move & Crawl Ball](#)

For Toddlers:

- ◆ [Vtech Rhyme & Discover Book](#)
- ◆ [Leapfrog Learn & Groove Radio](#)
- ◆ [Sing-Along CD Player](#)
- ◆ [Touch, Feel, & Match Tactile Board](#)
- ◆ [Crayola Beginnings Color Me a Song](#)
- ◆ [Wikki Stix](#)—A fantastic way to encourage your child's creative side. They can use these sticky sticks to form into their own design. Parents can also use them to outline pictures, make designs of shapes that the child is struggling to understand.



And for the older child in your family:

- ◆ www.keysensegames.com
- ◆ [Talking Solar System](#)
- ◆ [Leap Frog Turbo Twist Math](#)
- ◆ [Birdsong Identifier](#)
- ◆ Also: visit the Braille book store to find games which have been Brailled to make them accessible for families to play together.

You can find lots more suggestions of toys and activities for your visually impaired children at <http://www.wonderbaby.org>.

There are all sorts of fun activities for families to do together in the Holiday season. This is usually a time for baking special desserts- cookies, pies and so much more. What a wonderful opportunity for kids to learn about measuring, pouring, stirring and be there helping Mom or Dad prepare a dessert that will be shared by family and friends. A perfect boasting opportunity for older kids. Yes, it means there will be more mess to clean up. You might go a bit slower as you prepare the ingredients, but your vision impaired child will walk away with a memory and feeling so proud of herself.

I remember the very first tree my family and I decorated. The girls were so excited. They were 3 and 5 years old. We carefully selected the ornaments we wanted. They argued about the color of lights we were to have. When we were finished, Oh my! They were so pleased with themselves. The tree would have won first place in the worst decorated tree category, but the pleasure our family had working together, the pride in the girls would have won most favored family activity.

The holidays can be so much fun! There is so much to do, to smell, to hear, to see! It is a time for families to share together. It can also be a stressful time for



families. The child with no vision or low vision may be uncomfortable with all the unfamiliar people, sounds and sights. Talk to him. Let him know what's going on. If you are going to a family gathering role play what it might look like. When you arrive, give her time to accustom herself to her environment, encourage family members or friends the child hasn't seen for a while to say their name as they approach the child. And take breaks. If you're overwhelmed or notice your child becoming overwhelmed by the noise and activities take a time-out in a quiet room for a few minutes to regroup.

We would like to wish you a very happy Holiday celebration!!!

PARENTS CORNER

This article was submitted by one of our readers to share her experiences with other parents. If you have a story that you would like to share, please let us know



Christmas With Kalea

By Erica Taylor

One of the most fun parts of the Christmas season is doing fun projects, decorating, and baking with your child. It is so important to find things that your visually impaired child can actively participate in to prepare and enjoy the holidays as well. One of the most fun things we do with Kalea when getting ready for Christmas would be to decorate a Christmas tree and let her choose and pick the ornaments she would like to use and let her really put them on the tree herself. Another thing our family enjoys doing with her is baking and cooking. Making the cookies and cupcakes is so fun. Prepare ahead of time and make sure your child can really dig in and make a mess. Prepare the kitchen or cooking area, get ingredients out, measuring cups (Braille measuring cups and spoons). If you need to put down plastic, wash their hands and let them help. Don't do it all for them. Let them dig those little hands into the mix and help measure things and really enjoy the whole process. Ask them to remember the ingredients make this a fun activity. Being the parent of a totally blind child teaches you a lot. This is not the time to be in a hurry or just do it on your own. Let them enjoy this time with you and have fun. Most importantly let them make a MESS!!!! Sometimes I start to run though the rain, I hate it and I find Kalea stopping to dance in it. Taking the time to get wet and splash with her are some of the best times we have ever had. When you take the time and enjoy the experience with your child there is nothing better!! A mess can always wait to be cleaned and it is well worth the smile on your child's face.



Upcoming Events

Applications will be available in mid-January for these summer programs:

- ◆ **Dates for YES 1: July 6th-17. Location: School for the Blind, Vancouver WA. Ages 14 & 15**
- ◆ **Dates for YES 2: June 29th – August 1th Location: Delta Delta Delta Sorority House, Seattle WA. Ages 16-18**
- ◆ **Bridge: July 13 to August 15. Location: Eastern Washington University,**

Our Staff

DSB's 'Birth to age 13' population of blind/visually impaired children is served by statewide vision consultants Debbie Brown and Janet George. Debbie covers the geographic area of Washington State, east of the Cascades/north to Canada/south to the Oregon border. Janet covers the rest of Washington State. Debbie can be reached at 509.456.2933 or email debbie.brown@dsb.wa.gov Janet at 206.906.5530 or email janet.george@dsb.wa.gov If you are uncertain which consultant covers your area, you can contact our Seattle office at 800.552.7103 or submit an inquiry through our website at www.dsb.wa.gov

A little bit about Debbie and Janet...



Janet: I was born in Kingston Jamaica and moved to the United States in the mid 1980's. I received my Bachelor's degree in elementary education from Boise State University in 2006 and my Master's in special education and as a Teacher of the vision impaired from Portland State University.

I enjoy reading, walking playing with my guide dog, Crochet and singing off key to the great annoyance of my roommate. I have two grown daughters who mostly think I'm crazy but assure me they still love me!

I love working with the families I serve. One of my greatest joys is to see a child with a visual impairment do something they thought they couldn't. I feel well rewarded! As I tell new parents who are interested in DSB services, I don't mind questions about my own vision impairment: How do you ...? What do you do when ...? I try to answer to the best of my ability because I want them to have as much information as possible so they can help their visually impaired child be as successful as he or she can be.



Debbie: My background is primarily in vocational rehabilitation and working with transition youth of multiple disabilities. I have lived in our great Washington State all of my life. In 1995, I transferred to Services for the Blind in Spokane. In 2002, I began working with children and youth in various DSB programs. My work experience in multiple disabilities and youth allows me to offer parents some perspective of what their child's future can be. Perhaps my favorite work responsibility is the Bridge program which teaches college-bound blind youth how to succeed and thrive in college, their lives and careers.

Hadley School for the Blind

By: *Debbie Brown*

Have you heard of tuition-free distance education from the Hadley School for the Blind? Are you already **familiar with Hadley School, but haven't enrolled? Why take Hadley courses in the comfort of your own home?**



**The Hadley School
for the Blind**

Hadley courses are specifically designed to meet the needs of busy families. You can study these courses online or by postal mail. Instructors are credentialed and experienced in blindness skills. A variety of topics include:

- ◆ Child development
- ◆ Independent living
- ◆ Braille
- ◆ Understanding the IFSP and IEP processes

Visit their website at www.hadley.edu Eligibility and enrollment information:

Who's Eligible?

You are eligible to enroll in the Family Education Program (FEP) if you are a parent or grandparent of a blind or severely visually impaired child or you are a spouse, adult daughter or son, or adult sibling of a blind or severely visually impaired adult. As Hadley's courses are offered worldwide, it is important that you be able to read and understand course written in English.

How Do You Enroll?

Visit Hadley's website for additional course information and school policies. Complete and submit the Family Education Enrollment application online, or contact Student Services at 800.526.9909 for assistance in completing the form.

The ABC Newsletter staff recommends these courses, based upon positive reviews from other families of blind/visually impaired children. See Hadley website for detailed descriptions.

- ◆ **How to Be Your Child's Advocate. Course FAM-131**
- ◆ **Learning Through Play. Course LPA-111**
- ◆ **Parenting Children with Multiple Disabilities. Course PMD-111**
- ◆ **Social Skills series, Foundation through Elementary Years. Courses SSK-111, SSK-211, & SSK-311**

