

Parent to Parent

For Parents and Families of Students in Kentucky who are Blind and Visually Impaired

Summer 2010

Kentucky School for the Blind
Family Support Center

Member of Parent Resource Centers of KY



Come and Find Out What the Future Holds for Your Child with a Visual Impairment

Kentucky parents and families are in for a real treat as the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) brings back **Kevin O'Connor, CSP** for the **2010 Statewide Family Conference on October 8-9**. O'Connor will be the keynote speaker. This dynamic professional speaker, teacher, consultant and author is sure to inspire, motivate and encourage you to gaze at the many, many educational and lifestyle choices that are available to children with visual impairments.

As the past president of the National Association of Parents of the Visually Impaired (NAPVI), O'Connor has made presentations for the Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB) and in 1995 KSB engaged his talents in developing a strategic plan for the school.

O'Connor teaches at Loyola University, is a corporate consultant and has authored six books. In addition, he is the father of a 21-year-old son who is blind and a student at George Washington University.

This conference is a family affair. While you are attending informative sessions, KSB will provide childcare and/or a variety of fun activities for your children.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to hear this renowned speaker and to interact with other Kentucky parents and families. Registration information will be sent out in August.

Please mark Oct. 8-9 on your calendar now!

SAVE THE DATE

When

October 8-9, 2010

What

Statewide Family
Conference

Theme

Gazing at Options: What
Does the Future Hold for
Your Child with Visual
Impairments

Special Guest

Kevin O'Connor, CSP

Where

Kentucky School
for the Blind

Contact

502-897-1583, ext. 221

Mother Shares Story about Braden's and Stuart's Trip to KSB Low Vision Clinic

By: Erica Cutright, Parent

My son Braden, has low vision. He is actually legally blind. Braden also has Asperger's Syndrome, which is on the autism spectrum. He is very high functioning and really enjoys life.

Braden loves to play music and learn about other people's families. Braden is like a "little professor." He says he hopes to work for 911, or to become a teacher. He currently takes his imaginary "brother," *Stuart Little*, a stuffed toy mouse, with him to most places.

When it comes to Braden's education, we have been very fortunate to be at a great school with teachers who have always been accommodating and easy to work with. We actually heard about KSB's Low Vision Clinic (LVC) from Braden's teacher of the visually impaired Jennifer Murphy. She has been a wonderful asset and always keeps us informed of ways to improve Braden's education and lifestyle.

Murphy and KSB set up everything for the LVC. We filled out a few forms on Braden's history and diagnosis. LVC Coordinator Meg Stone contacted us quickly to set an appointment. It was a very easy and streamlined process. There was no cost on our part, except for gas for the trip to Louisville. On the day we went to the LVC, the weather was awful. It was cold and snow was in the forecast, but we were met with warm smiles. Everyone was welcoming.

Braden brought along his "brother" *Stuart Little*. Braden was a little apprehensive about the eye exam, especially since he had never met Dr. Wood. She took the time to talk with him before the exam and to put him at ease. She met and talked to *Stuart* as he, too, was a little scared.

During the low vision evaluation, Dr. Wood would conduct all the things she needed to do first on *Stuart Little* and then on Braden. She looked into *Stuart Little's* right eye and then she would look into Braden's right eye. She would have *Stuart Little* read the letters on the chart and then ask Braden to do the same. Dr. Wood was so patient and thoughtful with Braden and of course, with *Stuart*. It meant so much to my husband and I that she took her time with Braden and really made him feel at ease. I am sure it made the visit longer for



Jennifer Wood, O.D., F.A.A.O., examines Stuart Little's eye before conducting the same procedure on Braden's eye during the February 2010 Low Vision Clinic.

everyone, but no one seemed to mind. Everyone wanted Braden to have an accurate and helpful eye exam, and to do that he needed to relax.

Dr. Wood explained everything thoroughly and answered all of our questions. She gave some suggestions as to what technology may help him in school and what we can do at home to increase his quality of life in regard to his vision.



“Luckily, we also found out that Stuart Little is visually impaired. Braden had a suspicion that he was, but was grateful to have a doctor’s opinion.”



I would highly recommend the LVC for students with low vision. The assessment offered us more information about Braden’s vision. The technology suggestions were helpful and his school was able to obtain what was recommended.

Even though the snowy weather was approaching, we were still offered a tour of KSB. We were really impressed with all that the school has to offer. Braden was given a contact of a former KSB student who was a 911 dispatcher so that he could communicate with him about a possible career. The visit really made Braden feel special and “normal” all at the same time.

Luckily, we also found out that *Stuart Little* is visually impaired. Braden had a suspicion that he was, but was grateful to have a doctor’s opinion.

LVC Dedicated to Enhancing Visual Functioning

While KSB has brought in eye care professionals to address student vision needs for a number of years, it wasn’t until 1989 when the school hired its first low vision coordinator. During that same year, the Low Vision Clinic (LVC), as we know it today, was established.

Though LVC personnel, doctors, technology and other details have changed, the mission has remained the same. That mission is to provide a quality low vision evaluation to determine whether a student with low vision can benefit from optical and non-optical devices, as well as adaptive techniques, to enhance visual functioning. This type of evaluation is performed in addition to the care the



Dr. Jennifer Wood discusses some information Berea Independent student Sydney Gabbard during a low vision evaluation.

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LVC Dedicated to Enhancing Visual Functioning, continued from page 3:

student receives from his or her primary eye care provider. It should not be used to as a venue to update eye reports, or to replace routine eye examinations.

According to LVC Coordinator Meg Stone, the clinical low vision evaluation differs from the examination of the primary eye care specialist in the following ways:

- **a comprehensive, goal-oriented case history is obtained prior to the low vision examination**
- **special charts and materials are use for assessment of near and distance visual acuity not routinely used in general eye examinations**
- **prescriptions for optical, non-optical, and/or non-visual devices to help individuals meet specific visual need may be written**
- **information about the individual's functional use of vision is shared**

If a student is being considered for referral to the LVC, the referring party should first contact Stone to establish that it is an appropriate referral. The process continues with discussion of the low vision concerns of the student in an Admission and Release Committee (ARC) meeting in the student's school district.

The following documentation must be completed. Students must have a current (within the last three years) Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessment (FVLMA). The FVLMA documents the need for a low vision exam. If the ARC agrees that the student obtain a clinical low vision evaluation, an evaluation planning form is completed and signed by the parents. A low vision exam referral form is also completed by the student's teacher of the visually impaired and/or by the student's parent. The evaluation planning form, FVLMA, low vision exam referral form and an eye report within the last year are forwarded to Stone for scheduling.

The clinical low vision evaluation differs from the examination of a primary eye care specialist by starting with a comprehensive case history. Once the appointment has been confirmed, the parents are sent a medical pediatric history form to complete and return before the appointment for review by the LVC doctor. The doctor also reviews the FVLMA, the low vision exam referral form, and the eye report before seeing the student.

Sawyer Shirley, Barren County student, and his dad check out the resource table while waiting to see Dr. Wood.



During the exam, the doctor uses special charts and materials not routinely used in general eye examinations to assess near and distance acuity. Peripheral vision and color vision are also checked. In addition to prescribing the standard glasses, the doctor may also prescribe low vision devices to meet specific visual needs after exploring the usage of the device with the student. The doctor discusses the student's interest and motivation in using the device.



Bullitt County Teacher of the Visually Impaired Teri Wing speaks with two of her students during a visit to the LVC. The students (left to right) are Dawson Barr and Kenny Breeden.

A written report is created with the doctor's findings as well as recommendations for low vision devices to be used for functional activities and other suggestions such as print size for texts. Often recommendations for other agencies or eye specialists are included. This report is sent to the student's parents, the school district and others upon authorization by a parent.

Three to four LVC's are scheduled throughout the year and are funded by the generosity of the KSB Charitable Foundation. The funding also provides school districts the opportunity to borrow low vision devices and/or technologies that have been recommended for a student seen through the LVC on a trial basis. To learn more about low vision services at KSB visit our webpage at: www.ksb.k12.ky.us/Resources/LowVision.htm. You can learn more about the KSB Charitable Foundation at www.ksbcf.org.

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Scholarships Available through GuildScholar Award

The Jewish Guild for the Blind has an annual **GuildScholar Award** scholarship program for college bound high school students who are legally blind. Twelve-fifteen scholarships, up to \$15,000 per scholarship, will be awarded.

Applications are accepted from students at the end of their junior year in high school, with recipients selected and scholarships awarded later in their senior year.

The application deadline is Sept. 15. Please take advantage of the opportunity and share this information with all families you know who may meet the criteria. The application process is online at www.jgb.org/guildscholar.asp.

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Elliott County Student takes Top Honors in Braille Challenge Competition

Article reprinted with permission from the Elliott County Schools Newsletter Volume 5, Issue 8, March 2010

Danielle Burton, a freshman at Elliott County High School, took first place in the regional Braille Challenge held in Nashville, TN on January 28, 2010. Danielle represented Kentucky School for the Blind and was the first student from KSB to place in the competition. She also won first place in the slate and stylus competition.

Danielle is the daughter of Rick and Gena Burton and the granddaughter of Denny and Shirley Mowrey and Dude and Sue Johnson. *Congratulations to Danielle from all of her friends and family. We are all very proud of you!*



Danielle Burton is surrounded by various types of devices that enable a person to communicate in Braille.

Check out News from Family Groups in Kentucky

WESTERN KY

A very informative program was presented to Families of Children who are Blind and Visually Impaired (FCBVI) and teachers of the visually impaired (TVI's) on Mar. 13 in Eddyville. Kenny Jones, KSB Outreach Consultant and Executive Director of the KY Association of Blind Athletes (KABA) made a presentation on healthy lifestyles. Jones covered topics on nutrition, exercise and being physically fit. Goalball, beep baseball and judo were discussed as possible activities for blind and visually impaired persons of all ages.



KSB Family Support Specialist Mitch Dahmke gave information about the INSIGHT Postsecondary Preparation Program for college bound students. INSIGHT aids high school juniors and seniors in becoming familiar and comfortable in a post-secondary

Marina Tatum, a student from Marshall County (right) and KSB Outreach Early Childhood Consultant check out the Easter Corgi during the Western KY family meeting.

setting. This program takes place annually for one week in June at Morehead State University.

Brian Goemmer from Lab Computers updated the audience on new technology available to blind and visually impaired persons.

The highlight of the day was when KSB Outreach Consultant Nona Bazzell shared with the children her Easter Corgi. Much like the Easter Beagle from Charlie Brown, the Easter Corgi entertained children and adults alike.

NORTHERN KY

The Northern KY FCBVI met on Mar. 11 to hear Ellen Gallagher and Laura McMahon from Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D) Chicago office. They informed the crowd on how to utilize RFB & D's products and services.

BIG EAST

The Big East FCBVI met on Apr. 17 at Greenbo Lake State Park. Brian Goemmer of Lab Computers conducted a scavenger hunt using the latest GPS devices. The children also decorated flower pots and planted flowers in them while information was shared with parents and adults attending the gathering.

RIVER REGION

The Owensboro area of River Region held their first FCBVI meeting on May 6 at Legion Park in Owensboro. Providing information during the evening was Mae Parrish, a representative from the Kentucky Office for the Blind; Rick Ricks, Executive Director of the KSB Charitable Foundation and Mitch Dahmke from the KSB Family Support Center.



Mae Parrish, representative from Kentucky Office for the Blind, talks with families of the Owensboro area FCBVI group at their inaugural meeting in May.

Parent to Parent is a quarterly publication containing information relevant to Kentucky parents and families of children who are blind and visually impaired.

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To receive an electronic copy of this newsletter, or to submit an article, e-mail mitch.dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us, or phone 502-897-1583, ext. 221.

Low Vision Resources Available on the Web

Here are a few low vision resources available on the Internet that contain some very useful information. *Please check them out!*

LOW VISION GATEWAY ~ www.lowvision.org

This website provides information on practically every facet of low vision. Some of the topics covered are bioptic driving, macular degeneration, low vision rehabilitation, low vision aids, new vision loss and more. This is a very good resource that you may want to bookmark it as a favorite website.

LOW VISION RESOURCE CENTER ~ www.lowvision.com

Information on eye conditions, helpful tips on coping with visual impairment, information about eye care professionals and others are available from this site. There is also an interesting article on a piano tuning school for only people with visual impairments.

AMERICAN PRINTING HOUSE FOR THE BLIND (APH) ~ www.aph.org

APH is not only a Kentucky treasure, but serves individuals who are blind and visually impaired worldwide. On their website, you have access to a wide range of products and services for children and adults of all ages. In addition, there are numerous resources for professionals serving children and adults with visual impairments.



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