



The Beacon

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project

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Fun For All at the WDBTAP Family Weekend!

We were so excited to host WDBTAP family day October 21st, it was our first in-person event since 2019! Families came together to connect, learn, celebrate and have fun as a community.

We were fortunate to have Dr. Cat Burkat, and Clare Weigert with the group Dance Sees No Limits at our event. Dance Sees No Limits is from the Madison area, they offer adaptive dance classes for children who are blind or have low vision. The lively music was a great start for the day. We spent the afternoon learning about WDBTAP, getting to know each other, playing accessible board games and painting pumpkins.

Fun For All continued on page 3

3rd Annual WDBTAP Art Show



Get ready for the 3rd Annual art show! We need photos of your WDBTAP students creations to share in our virtual art gallery. All photos need to be submitted by January 19th, 2024. The gallery opening will be on Zoom, February 16, 2024 at 6:00 pm. All participants will receive a prize package, don't miss out on the fun! Register using the [form located here](#). Contact Jenny at jennifer.hudson-stanek@wesp-dhh.wi.gov with questions or for more information.

Welcome Marcy Jo to WDBTAP



Marcy Jo teaching ASL at family weekend.



Please Help with the 2023 Child Count

WDBTAP is required annually by the Office of Special Education Programming, OSEP, to submit an annual child count. This information is reported using a unique code, no names are used in reporting. If you have a child or student who is part of WDBTAP you can access the child count form for 2023 by using this link which will take you to a [Microsoft form](#). You can learn more about the [WDBTAP child count here](#). If you have questions or concerns please contact Jenny at (608)356-2023 or jennifer.hudson-stanek@wesp-dhh.wi.gov

This year has brought many changes for WDBTAP, the best one by far has been an additional administrative support person, Marcy Jo Morford. We thought it would be nice to introduce Marcy Jo to our WDBTAP family.

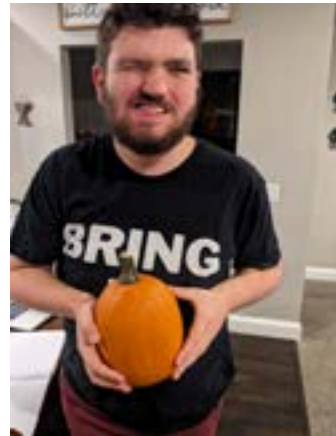
Marcy Jo, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?:

"I am from a 3rd generation deaf family, and 2nd generation Wisconsin School for the Deaf alumni with my mom and sister. I have lived on the East and West Coasts besides the Midwest. I have 2 CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) children, they are 23 and 25 years old. My daughter lives in South California near my family and my son still lives with us. I have been married for almost 4 years to my wonderful husband Salim, who moved here from Morocco.

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Painting pumpkins at the fall family weekend.



Liam happily imagining pumpkin pie!



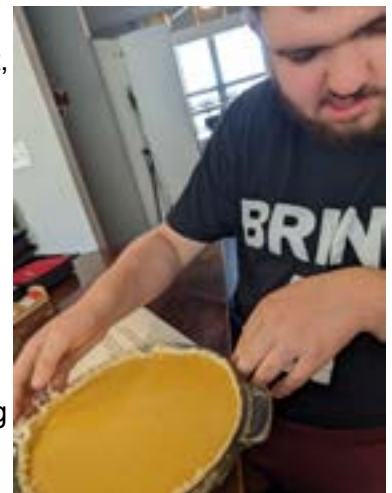
Liam reading the pie recipe in braille.

Pumpkin Fun!



Liam using braille measuring spoons.

With the WDBTAP fall family weekend landing in October it is a nice perk when your Deafblind Consultant, Jen Gettelman is also a pumpkin farmer. Her family graciously donated pumpkins for the event so kids could take them home. While lots of our families had fun painting their pumpkins, one young man, Liam, felt the pumpkin and excitedly exclaimed pie! Liam and his Mom, Jodi Anderson, WDBTAP Family Engagement Coordinator, took their pumpkin home and made pumpkin pie from scratch, a first for both of them. Jodi started by locating a recipe and transcribing it into braille for Liam to access. Liam was not a fan of touching the pumpkin guts but participated in all other aspects. Braille measuring cups are his favorite, Liam loves to use them. Liam measured, stirred, whisked, poured and baked but his favorite part was the eating!



Liam's pumpkin pie.

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We met through mutual friends in my hometown. I've been involved in the deaf community my whole life. In 2023 I visited Morocco with both my children when they were backpacking in Europe."

What are the hats you wear for WESP-DHH?:

Since 2012, I have worked as a deaf mentor then office associate for the past 4 years now. My current roles are with Outreach, WDBTAP and working closely with deaf mentor programs."

What do you do in your free-time?:

During my free-time, I enjoy crafts such as making bath bombs, shower melts and bath salts for our booth at the deaf events. Also I love to cook food with my husband. We love camping and traveling.

What is the best part of your job?:

I am fortunate to work with WESP-DHH because we can communicate in ASL daily. I also do some crafts for my job. I love to see deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind children at different events.

What do you wish people knew about you?:

I am an easy going person. I love to learn and try new crazy things. My cheap thrills are high coast rides- I have tried the Giant Canyon Swing at Glenwood Springs Adventure park in Colorado.

Do you have any long term goals?:

Yes, my husband and I are working to start our food truck business, hopefully, we can start in early 2024. We want to fly to Morocco to visit his family in 2024 as he has not returned there since 2015.



Bowling Fun

Later we traveled to Scwoegler Entertainment Center for bowling and pizza. Jodi Anderson, WDBTAP family Engagement Specialist, suggested bowling stating they had recently taken Liam bowling for the first time and he loved it. The vibration and crashing noises from the pins was engaging and accessible. Liam was not alone,

apparently many of our kids enjoy bowling and for those that had never bowled before we have some new fans of the sport.

For those that still had energy after our active day the hotel offered a small water park where the kids and

parents could spend time with their new friends. The WDBTAP staff enjoyed the day as well getting to know new families that we had not yet met and catching up with those that we have not seen in awhile. Our families enjoyed the experience too. Many said the best part of the weekend was meeting other families, sharing experiences and just spending time together.

WDBTAP has big plans for the next five years and we hope this is just the first of many future family get-togethers. Follow our Facebook Page and make sure to keep your contact information up to date so you do not miss out!



Families using the “boom whackers” during dance class.

WDBTAP Spreading the News on Interveners

WDBTAP has been busy presenting to Special Education Directors around the state on the topic of interveners. From Ashland to Whitewater and everywhere in between, our goal is to teach people about the role of an intervener and to continue to build a deeper understanding of how interveners support students with deafblindness.

Interveners work to provide access to information that is typically gained through vision and hearing for a student who is deafblind. An intervener as part of the educational team works to develop communication skills, build concepts, establish relationships and so much more. In Wisconsin, interveners are recognized as related service providers. WDBTAP supports interveners in a variety of ways. One of these ways is through reimbursing individuals who are working with a student who is deafblind to take training through Utah State University to become an Intervener Specialist for the Deafblind (ISDB).

If you are interested in becoming an intervener please reach out to WDBTAP. WDBTAP will reimburse the cost of the coursework for professionals and paraprofessionals who work with a child who is deafblind. Visit the [WDBTAP intervener web page](#) to learn more.

DVR and HKNC Presentation on YouTube

In November, young adults and their families joined a Zoom meeting to learn how the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) partners with the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) to provide youth services for deafblind teens in Southern Wisconsin. John Filek and McKenna Liesman from HKNC shared that once an individual has an open case with DVR the team may work with HKNC staff to provide services to support the young adult’s transition goals. HKNC is able to provide youth services such as job exploration counseling, work based learning opportunities, and work readiness skills training. They are also able to provide counseling on post-secondary and self-advocacy education. Andrea Simon, DVR workforce development area director, was also available to answer questions and share information about getting connected with DVR.

The presentation portion was recorded and can be viewed on the [WDBTAP Youtube site](#). To apply for DVR visit the [DVR web page](#) and select the county you want services in. To learn more about HKNC’s youth services please reach out to John Filek at jfilek@helenkeller.org or McKenna Liesman at mliesman@helenkeller.org. If you have any question about transition resources or would like to request support from WDBTAP please reach out to us at wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov

Cole's Story

By Lane McKittrick,

Project Director Idaho Project for Children
and Youth with Deaf-Blindness
Reprinted to read entire go to:

[Lane of inquiry blog.](#)



Our family celebrated a joyous event. Cole, our 2nd son, graduated from college. He's loved basketball since he was in the 1st grade and always had the dream to work in the NBA. He's worked so hard to make that dream come true and is on track to make that happen for himself. So, as I saw him walk across that stage, words cannot express all the emotions that washed over me. All my kids are special to me in their own unique ways, but today I'm going to tell you about Cole.

Cole is 17 months younger than his brother, Conner. We found out we were pregnant with Cole right around the time of Conner's deafness diagnosis. Throughout my 2nd pregnancy we were in complete panic mode - going from one doctor appointment to another, getting Conner approved to receive his cochlear implant and just figuring things out what his diagnosis would mean to our world. It was a stark contrast to when I was pregnant with Conner. With Conner, Todd and I played music to him in the womb and took time to anticipate his birth. With Cole, I was just hoping to find time to take a shower and get some sleep. Yet, when Cole made his way into this world, it was such a happy time. He was healthy and he passed his newborn hearing test with flying colors. In my eyes, he was perfect - such a happy baby.

Cole's childhood was not what I would have hoped for him. We were constantly on the go when he was a baby, focused on Conner - driving an hour to and from speech therapy, doing occupational therapy, and more. I had to cut back at work and we scraped up enough money to share a nanny with our neighbors. Cole spent most of his days with the nanny in the car meeting me at various medical appointments. He only napped in a car seat. I was so caught up in my grief that I missed out on some important points in his early life. Cole grew up not knowing a life any different than this. He was born into this wonderful but chaotic family life. When our youngest son, Dalton, was born with Usher syndrome like his older brother, Conner was thrilled - another brother like him. Cole, on the other hand, was upset by this news. It's right then that I realized how hard it had been for him

too. It hit me hard.

As the boys got older, Cole took on an important role in the family that I didn't probably properly acknowledge or understand more fully until several years later. He and Conner went to the same schools and Cole played a mostly silent but important role in his older brother's life. He turned on lights, held his hand, watched out for him at school. He was there for Conner every step

of the way. When his two younger brothers were born, this trend continued.

I honestly don't know what I would have done without Cole. Not only was he a huge support for his brothers but as he got older, he became a respite for me as well. I tried hard to spend one on one time with him. I loved hanging out with him. It was my reprieve from deafblindness and all the worry. I had missed the early years and I wanted to be there for him. Through it all, I have always wondered if I did enough to support him. As Todd and I grieved, I'm sure he was grieving too. What were the impacts of him not having a "normal" childhood? Over the past 20 years, I've thought about this often.

Then I saw him walk across that stage to graduate and my heart burst with pride. The road wasn't what we thought it would be, but it was our unique journey. I am so proud of the amazing man he has become. Today he frequently calls his brothers to check in on them. He makes an effort to spend time with each one of them separately. I see how he is such a good friend to his brothers and to his friends. He's the first person to offer help if anyone needs it. He is kind, compassionate, empathetic, and caring. He's also dedicated and more motivated than anyone I know.

Every time I go to a workshop that discusses the impact of disability on siblings, I am instantly brought to tears. As parents with children with disabilities, often we are so lasered focused on the needs of these children, the other siblings live in the shadows. So today, I wanted to recognize the important role Cole and his brother, Hunter, play in our lives. The world is a better place because you both are in it. Thank you for all you do. To all the siblings out there, thank you for being you - truly special in many ways - a true gift to your families and this world.

Lending Library Resources

The WDBTAP Lending Library provides toys, learning aids and training materials for students, parents and professionals. These items can be borrowed for up to 3 months at no cost to you. All items are cleaned and sterilized before being mailed to any location. Visit wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap to see these or any WDBTAP materials. Send us a message at wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov or call Jenny at 608-356-2023 to make a borrowing request.



4 Plate Communicator Say it Play it

Communicator for people who need a large target area. The 3 inch by 5 inch plates can be positioned at a 30 or 70 degree angle.



Adapted Bluetooth Speaker

Control your music with this adapted Bluetooth speaker. The three 2.5 inch buttons control six essential functions.

Turtle Switch

The turtle switch activates with a light touch. Can choose from music, lights, vibration or all three.



Busy Ball Popper

Air-powered popping fun! Press the button or activate with a switch and watch the balls pop up and roll down the track.



CVI Friendly Books

Books made for children with cortical visual impairment or cerebral visual impairment (CVI). Books are large print on a black background with solid bold colors and shapes.

Resource Corner

Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library

Utilize the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL) to Support Assistive Technology and Accessible Educational Materials in your School, District, or Share with Families

The WTBBL is a network library of the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (NLS), Library of Congress. WTBBL provides free braille and talking book library service for Wisconsin residents with temporary or permanent low vision, blindness, or a physical or perceptual disability that prevents them from reading or holding the printed page. This includes individuals with reading disabilities. The NLS offers books the way you want them: in braille or audio, mailed to your door for free or instantly downloadable. All books, equipment, services, and the mailing of materials are free to the print-disabled. WTBBL also offers additional services, including kits (print-braille and audio), audio-described movies, Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD and BARD mobile) and NEWSLINE (free audio newspapers and magazines). For more information, please visit the Talking Books website or give us a call at (414) 286-3045 or toll-free 1-800-242-8822.

WDBTAP Literacy Page

WDBTAP has a new [literacy web-page](#) with tons of resources for teachers and families based on popular children's books. You can find the stories in spoken English and ASL, activity guides, ASL vocabulary and more. Check it out today!



It's a Wrap!

As the year ends we want to thank all of you for your support. We are making big plans for the new year and can not wait to share them with you. Make sure to check our [WDBTAP Facebook Page](#) and the [WDBTAP website](#) often so you don't miss out! We can also always be

reached at (608)356-2023 or wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov
See you in 2024!

The Beacon On-Line

You can view this version of the Beacon along with past issues at our website at wesp-dhh.wi.gov/wdbtap/newsletter



What Types of Technical Assistance does WDBTAP provide?

- Parent/Family trainings and assistance in connecting families with one another
- Statewide and regional workshops for service providers and families
- Observation, support and coaching in programming for children
- Intensive deafblind training series for paraprofessionals who work one on one with children and youth who are deafblind
- Assistance in identifying children and youth who are deafblind
- Referral to relevant local, regional and national agencies
- Lending library with materials, equipment and toys to benefit deafblind children/youth on the Registry

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