

# The Lions Roar



THE LIONS ROAR

November 2009

## Education

By Craig Meador, Director On-Campus Programs



We are off to another great start! Our biggest concerns for the fall were adjusting schedules, Accreditation and math anxiety.

### Schedules:

Schedules are everyone's concern at the beginning of the year. Staff and students are very adept at finding the scheduling conflicts and glitches. It then becomes a challenge of meeting all the student requirements according to the IEP and State education guidelines. This is nothing new but always a reality. We started the year with 65 students on-campus with 3 more completing their evaluation packets. In addition we have several requests from Oregon for student evaluations and possible placement.

### Accreditation:

We are scheduled for Accreditation renewal at the end of March, 2010. This will be a multi-day event that features a review of all on-campus and off-campus programs. Committees will be developed to include board, staff, students and parents. These committees will review the past recommendations from the 2004 accreditation and the current Strategic Plan. From these reports they will develop an improvement plan that helps to drive the accreditation report. Over the course of the year we will be reviewing curriculum plans, operations and compiling state and school data that demonstrate student progress.

### Math Anxiety:

Our math classes have gone high tech. Our new math teacher Robin Lowell actually resides in Seattle. She joins her classes each day via the K-20 system. We have placed a teacher in the classroom here to facilitate management of books, papers and to help with the feedback process. This has been a big process. Thanks to WSSB staff Sherry Hahn and Ed Lukowski for facilitating this out of the box approach. Our first week went very well with minimal to no glitches.

### Transportation:

This year is the beginning of our combined transportation program with the School for the Deaf. Students are broken into two groups, the Taco and the Bell. The Taco run covers all stops from Tacoma, south to the school. The Bell run covers the stops north of Tacoma to Bellingham. We have also increased our fliers this year. It appears that we will have 9 fliers.

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## Pacific Northwest Fall Training Opportunity at WSSB

On October 9, 2009 WSSB provided a one day in-service that received great reviews and will more than likely lead to additional training and workshop opportunities. WSSB has always been in the in-service business and has provided yearly training to over 300 teachers, para-professionals and others outside of school. In-services have been provided based upon requests from stakeholders from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Colorado, British Columbia, etc., just to name a few. Many in-service programs have been provided on-campus, while others have been developed to utilize online systems including interactive video.

The program was a little different than our typical in-service where a day or more is devoted to one major topic. This in-service provided a full day of one hour sessions that were designed to spark interest, answer questions and connect each participant with a person that could answer any future questions. The following topics were covered: Duxbury (overview and update), Networking with Resources on the WSSB Campus, Braille+/18 cell Braille display through APH, Mini Netbooks, Nutrition and the Eye, Trekker GPS Training, Tactile Museum of Natural History, Adaptive P.E. Program "Fit for Life", Collection and Effective use of Data, Accessible Art for students, Tactile Mapping Project – University of Oregon, and a great barbecue during the lunch break. This was a lot in one day, but it also provided those in attendance the opportunity to network with others, to provide input as to whether WSSB should provide more of these types of in-service programs, and also gathered information as to which areas needed more intensive single topic training opportunities. WSSB is always trying to gather more information from stakeholders as to what type of training the school should be providing in the future. If you have ideas, send these to: [sherry.hahn@wssb.wa.gov](mailto:sherry.hahn@wssb.wa.gov).

## Generous Donation

By Adrienne Fernandez, Recreation/Volunteer Coordinator



Larry Holzman and Ruben Castaneda

Eric Miller and Nancy Rush-Miller created the Rush-Miller Foundation in 2001 when their son Garrett, lost his vision at the age of five. The Foundation is dedicated to helping children with blindness expand their vision of the world by providing them with tandem bikes.

On June 30, 2009 Nick Premo received a tandem bike through the Rush-Miller Foundation. Nick and his parents, James and Patty celebrated Nick's ninth birthday by holding a fundraiser to purchase a tandem bike for the WSSB's tandem cycling program. Over a hundred friends and family members attended Nick's birthday celebration raising nearly \$5,000, enabling Rush-Miller to purchase two Cannondale street tandems for the WSSB tandem-cycling program.



Mike Bingle and Anthony Pegar

On September 6, 2009 the students had the opportunity to ride the new tandems throughout the community. The bikes are a wonderful addition to our tandem fleet and will certainly bring many smiles to the faces of our students.

## Outreach Department Update

By Dee Amundsen, Director of Outreach

Each year the Outreach Department contracts with school districts around the state to provide Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and/or Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services to children in public schools. These services can be direct or consultative, depending on the needs of the students.

WSSB Outreach Services are starting the year by providing 33 districts with a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and 20 districts with an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Additionally, for the past two years we have had a person in the role of Eastside Vision Coordinator. This was a pilot program, funded by the Legislature through a Decision Package. This position was eliminated at the close of the school year due to budget cuts. Catherine Golding, who served as the Eastside Vision Coordinator, has returned to her previous position in Outreach as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. The purpose of this pilot program was to provide leadership and promote the coordination of services, materials and trainings to better meet the expanded core curriculum needs of blind and visually impaired children in Eastern Washington. Although we do not physically have a person working in Eastern Washington at this time, we plan on providing as much support

as we can through distance and/or live training opportunities, continued statewide technology support and onsite consultation visits when requested and staff is available.

The WSSB Summer Institute for Educators is a five day training offered to educators and support staff who work with blind or visually impaired children in public schools. This Institute is always the last full week in July and is held on the WSSB campus. Once again this year we were at capacity with 50 participants and nine individuals on the waiting list. The Summer Institute for Educators is organized around the Expanded Core Curriculum and draws educators from a five-state area as well as British Columbia. An evaluation conducted at the end of the Institute indicated that 94% of participants were very or extremely satisfied with their experience here at the Institute. Each year the Institute fills up fast, so, if you are interested in attending in July 2010, please start checking our website, [www.wssb.wa.gov](http://www.wssb.wa.gov), after the first of the year for registration and scholarship information.

## Teacher In A Box

By Sherry Hahn, Digital/Distance Learning Coordinator

How do you teach math when your teacher retires and no one applies for the opening here at WSSB? Well you get creative. Ms. Robin Lowell, a certified math teacher that also is a trained teacher of the visually impaired, steps up and helps out. This is a rare but much needed combination of skills and we were very lucky to find her. The only catch is that she lives in the Seattle area, now what to do?

Technology – sometimes is a wonderful thing. Everyday Ms. Lowell starts up her video conferencing camera and the school does the same, and every day she teaches students at Washington State School their math from her home in Seattle. The kids refer to her as “The Teacher in the Box”. Robin teaches four classes a day ranging from middle school math to Pre-calculus. A staff person is in the room to assist the students. It is working – the kids are really excited and doing well. The coordinated effort of all the WSSB staff, teachers, administrators, technology staff and students have worked hard to make this a smooth running and a fun experience.

## Update from the Superintendent—Schools Working Together for Students

By Dr. Dean O. Stenehjem, Superintendent

When I look around the country I see many positive things happening for blind and visually impaired (BVI) children. I've often thought if we could just package these wonderful services together in such a way that would allow access by all children, families and schools, what a great system we would have in place! Pockets of excellence in various disciplines exist in every state. Just imagine if we could connect all services together in a way that would provide universal access in a one stop system; the time, energy and funding that could be saved through this type of efficient service delivery system would be amazing. This would be the best example of schools without borders, access by all, and the ultimate partnership and sharing of resources.

If we look at what students need, put aside philosophical views and start measuring growth, outcomes and success, we can build such programs and systems that will not only help BVI children, but possibly become a better model for all of education. However, this takes courage, trust, the willingness to partner with others, sharing of the successes and failures, and developing the willingness to work as a team toward a unified goal. Some call this working outside of the box; I would like to think of this as opening the doors of opportunity and taking a large step. The technology is available, we just need to make the leap.

I believe schools for the Blind can help facilitate such a bold move that will help students in every state, resulting in state by state service improvement, better student outcomes, lower unemployment in the BVI community and help position schools for the Blind as lead organizations. In most states, schools for the Blind have very diverse services to offer and the public needs to be aware of the efficient and effective ways of helping students succeed, by tapping into all services available. The on-campus program is a very important service, but is not the only thing that most school's offer. However, this service is often questioned and we need to

do a better job of explaining all the positive elements that come from this program in a way that the public understands.

Over the years people have wondered why a BVI student should attend a school for the blind. Is this the right program? Do we offer what is needed? Are the schools capable of meeting all of the student's needs? Can we effectively measure growth and demonstrate the efficiencies gained through the intensive on-campus program and what are the overall outcomes of this program element?

I like to look at schools for the Blind as nothing more than Magnet Schools within a school district or maybe a region. We are not an isolated center, but centers of excellence, demonstration centers, highly specialized magnet schools that can assist students in making substantial gains in short periods of time that can lead to success. Therefore, helping students gain all the skills necessary, more efficiently, and allowing the student to gain this in a timely manner and reduce frustrations and failure. However, we can't do it all and we must work in harmony with our local schools and have flexible systems in place that allow for fluid flow of students to and from the residential school based upon needs in helping develop a confident, independent student with all the skills to succeed. Students must have access to the best of the best, must be challenged, high expectations need to be maintained, and students need to develop all of the skills needed to be successful. These skills are not only academics, but self-advocacy skills, social/emotional, confidence, and the specialty skills needed for a student who is BVI.

We are getting closer to having this become a reality, but in order for this to occur, we must continue to develop accessible and usable systems through digital networks that will link schools and resources so we can do a better job of sharing.

*Continued on next page*

## Update from the Superintendent (continued)

By Dr. Dean O. Stenehjem, Superintendent

As we continue to evolve, let's not place artificial barriers in the way that will limit access to any resource, let's develop the networks that will allow the sharing of specialized resources, and let's develop partnerships based upon trust and unity realizing that if we are to be the best, we need to work together. Why can't a student from another state take an online class from Washington and/or a Washington student take an online class from another school for the blind and/or accessible service provider? Why shouldn't states provide exchange programs so that a Washington student could attend a school in another state to gain a specialized skill, while a student from that state attends Washington. These are just questions we need to be asking to help all of us work together in guaranteeing that students who are BVI receive the best education possible!

**Recent research on accessible online learning:** Please check out some of the recent work that has been completed through a Sloan C grant in helping to develop systems and software that can begin to make the above happen: [www.cannect.org](http://www.cannect.org)

## Braille Access Center (BAC)/Instructional Resource Center (IRC) News

By Judi Sorter, Proofreader

Hello everyone! We have an important announcement! Don't you find IRC/BAC a bit tiresome and somewhat confusing? Well, we do. So, from now on we have a new name. We are the Ogden Resource Center. Same people, same place, same phone numbers, same address, same services—just a simpler name. What are those services? We provide textbooks in large print and braille and other educational materials for blind and visually impaired students in Washington state. We produce braille—textbooks, menus, workshop handouts, newsletters...anything that needs braille for people in our state and all over the country. We answer questions and share information whenever we can. To all of our great customers out there: The Ogden Resource Center is here to serve you—just as we always have been. Keep in touch!

## WSSB Teacher Recognized as Outstanding Teacher of the Year

By Craig Meador, Principal

The Principals of schools for the Blind recognized JoAnn Gatley as the 2009 Outstanding Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired. JoAnn received her award at the annual COSB Institute held in Louisville, Kentucky. JoAnn recently retired after the 2009 school year. The award was a fitting way to recognize JoAnn for her love for students and 16 years of service to WSSB. JoAnn's primary responsibilities were teaching upper level math and braille. She also taught online classes to professionals around the state helping them keep their braille certifications current. JoAnn provided the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction with feedback and guidance in making tests more accessible for blind and visually impaired students. Her room was always a buzz of activity with students who like to "hang" out in Gatley's room. She was always ready to provide a listening ear or a place for students to decompress.



JoAnn Gatley

In her acceptance speech JoAnn recognized her mentors, fellow staff members and especially the students. We wish her congratulations on a well deserved award and are very proud of her accomplishment.



## Residential Life—In With A Roar!

By Renee Corso, Associate Principal, After School and Evening Programs

Every start of the school year is full of action, activity, and renewed enthusiasm. The 2009 return to WSSB has been exceptionally so.

**Additions to Staffing:** I am pleased and thrilled to welcome JoAnne Fink to our team. JoAnne has volunteered at WSSB in many different areas, including the education, recreation, and residential departments. Most of the students already know JoAnne, and the Chapman girls were jumping up and down with excitement when they heard the news she'd be working in their cottage. JoAnne has a bachelor's degree with emphasis in Anthropology, Clinical Psychology and Sociology. She also received an honorary degree for her studies in Developmental Management and Conflict Studies. She also worked as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in South Korea for several years and as a camp counselor for special needs children at Camp USA.

**New Transportation Contract:** We are sharing bus service with the Washington School for the Deaf (WSD) this year and expect to save a significant amount of money by doing so. Just as exciting is seeing some of our students practicing sign with the WSD students, and watching the two groups come together and learn about and from each other.

**Preparing for H1N1 (Swine Flu):** WSSB Nurses Robin Williams and Cathlene Cover, have worked hard to prepare for and educate students and staff about how to prepare for the H1N1 virus. They have conducted numerous hand-washing clinics in the cottages, provided quality information to staff, students and parents from the Health Department on how best to limit the spread of the virus, as well as obtain a supply of the limited vaccine to inoculate our students.

**Reading Theatre & Internet Radio Station:** The Reading Theatre is off to a fantastic start. Students have selected and are practicing "The Trial of Socrates" as their first performance this year. Not only are they playing the various parts in the story, but are also

selecting and creating the sound effects to accompany the reading. Our goal this year is to do shorter plays so we can perform and create several shows for our internet radio station. Bob Sellers, Don Mitchell, Marianne Hertsche, and the local chapter of the National Federation of the Blind are again working with us each week and will record and edit the performances for broadcast.

The Internet Radio Station is in the process of a major renovation. Thanks once again to Omni Media and Jerry DeLaunay, WSSB is the grateful recipient of new and improved equipment, which will enable us to record high quality programs. Our plan is to eventually move the studio to the school building into the music wing, where two practice rooms will be renovated and become its new home. In the meantime, we'll be partnering with Mrs. Langley to record an array of "bedtime" and other stories for the station.

**After School Activities:** This fall, students are enjoying golf, hiking, tandem cycling, bowling, and outings to the Children's Theatre, along with a chance to participate in Crafts, Bingo, and Glee Club. In addition the students hosted a fantastic Halloween party in Chapman Cottage and really enjoyed the Harvest Dance that followed the night after.

**Open House:** The night began with our traditional spaghetti dinner, followed by Volunteer Orientation and the presenting of a generous check by the North River Racers for our tandem cycling program. At Open House, families and students alike enjoyed visiting classrooms, and talking with teachers. Highlights included a special project from Ms. Wilbur's Social Studies class with student built models depicting ancient civilizations, and classic and original poetry readings in Mrs. Tate's English class' second annual "Poetry Slam." Daily Living Skills students, with guidance and encouragement from Mrs. Langley and all the after school coaches, offered up a taste of their cooking talents with a beautiful spread of appetizers and a yummy array of desserts in each of the cottages.

## Way Back Travel Without Machine

By Jim Eccles, President, Former Students Association

Author's note: In their sixties-era TV cartoons, Mr. Peabody and Sherman traveled in their WayBack machine back to historical turning points. The duo made sure that, with helpful advice from a wise dog and his accompanying little boy, historically correct decisions were eventually made.

On June 23, of this past summer, I stepped way back in time to my late-sixties sophomore year, when I walked over to the just-built Kennedy Gym to be part of a summer school judo class: a two-session demonstration class taught by my judo instructor of some 40 years ago. The first thing one learns in judo is the arm movement used to break a fall. These "falling waves" sounded loud when practiced in our weekly judo class, Monday evenings, eight to ten; and the falling waves still sounded impressively loud, as these one-time judo students each brought down their free arms to the mat from (first) sitting, (then) squatting and (then) standing positions, just as they would if landing after a real judo throw, once weeks of falling waves work was mastered I felt as though I was back in my judo outfit, my gi (rhymes with me), with that electricity of expected competition in the air. Unfortunately, for the presumably somewhat frustrated students involved in this one-time exercise, their take-home message was probably something more like, "There are a lot of weeks and months of skill building to go through, before one can have a first one-on-one judo match with a single opponent."

For me, the session vividly brought back one of the first times I sparred with a partner. To dramatically demonstrate that weight differential did not matter in judo as it does in wrestling or boxing, Mr. Jim Troxel (the instructor then and now) paired me (at my sophomore weight of maybe 115 lbs.) with a huge 225 lb. opponent. We were in the old tumbling room with its high, wall-mounted horizontal ladder. When Coach gave the class our signal to begin sparring from a back-to-back sitting position on the floor with our assigned partners, I immediately jumped up, ran across the mat room to the horizontal ladder, swung up to a sitting position on the ladder, and, for good measure, climbed higher and perched on the supports above the ladder. While we were supposed to be sharpening our mat technique (the alternate way to win a match by holding down your opponent for 30 long seconds, if your initial judo throw does not garner the requisite one-point score to win the match outright immediately), I, instead, was concentrating on plain, old, western-style self-preservation: I was assigned my usual ten push-ups for putting too much imagination into my execution of specific instructions.

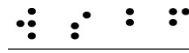
As the students on this June Tuesday early evening progressed through exposure to getting into the correct stance for the beginning of a match with a partner and experiencing a slow, careful hip throw simulation with our instructor, I had one additional flashback judo memory. I remembered the first time we went to an actual Portland judo club to see what a real match was like. There was a lot of ceremony and a lot of hard, daunting work. Our take-home message from our Portland club experience was that it would take long years of constant practice and study for any of us to hope to move up through the various ranks of judo skill.

I hope this past summer's single exposure to judo will whet the appetite of at least some, who will accept the challenge of exchanging that initial white belt for other, more advanced, colors. Somewhat akin to my fencing semester in college, I hope that at least some of these students will go on to reap the benefits in improved body balance, strength and flexibility that years of judo tutelage should bring them. It was great that summer school students could have their very first exposure to the self-improvement opportunities of judo right here at good, new WSSB—just as I did WayBack at good, old WSSB.

Who knows, if we could get several long-ago judo students to come to our June 2011 alumni gathering, maybe we, too, could spend an evening with Mr. Troxel, again. Now, does that new-fangled gym still have a horizontal ladder handy, in case of another looming personal crisis?

## Washington School for the Blind Foundation

By Barbara Sheldon, Executive Director



**WSBF**

Washington School for the Blind  
Foundation

Helping Washington's Blind Youth Achieve Success

It's a brand new school year once again. This year the Washington School for the Blind Foundation will be working hard focusing on the programs we have in place to empower students at Washington State School for the Blind to achieve independence.

For the past few years we've tried to welcome students back to school at WSSB with gift bags from the Foundation. This year we were able, with the help of donations from various companies, to provide a reusable bag filled with school supplies, goodies, and dental products. We would like to thank Fred Meyer, Safeway, Target, Walgreens, Premier Dental, Harmony Dental, and Cascade/New Horizons Dental.

Each year our Senior Technology Grant Program allows students who are completing their senior year at Washington State School for the Blind to acquire the technology that they are being trained to use while attending the school. The Foundation provides the grants at the beginning of the school year so that seniors can have the technology in their hands and learn to use it successfully. This grant requires a portion of the cost be paid back to the Foundation prior to graduation. By doing so, not only are seniors able to get the technology they need, but they have a vested interest in learning to use it fully and we are able to continue funding the project each year with the help of our donors as well. We hope to be able to expand this program to reach more seniors across the state in the future.

Starting last year the Holzman "Slow and Steady" Orthodontic Grant Program has made a huge difference in the lives of WSSB students by making orthodontics affordable. This program began with a large donation from longtime volunteer Larry Holzman. It helps pay for the portion of orthodontic work that the student's insurance doesn't cover.

Our programs are very important to our mission to provide funding and support for students in Washington who are blind and visually impaired. By strengthening these programs, we hope to be able to reach out to more students.

The Lions Roar Newsletter is produced three times per year at the Washington State School for the Blind, 2214 East 13th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661-4120. Phone 360-696-6321 Fax 360-737-2120  
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**WSSB—2009-2010 School Year Events**

November	Washington Council of the Blind Convention End of 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter Veterans Day Holiday Board of Trustees Meeting Thanksgiving Holiday	November 5-7 November 6 November 11 November 12-13 November 26-27
December	Tree Decorating Winter Holiday Program Winter Holiday	December 1 December 17 December 21-January 1
January	Students returning by bus/air Board of Trustees Conference Call M.L. King's Birthday PAYDAY Assembly Lions Swim Meet End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter/1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	January 3 January 12 January 18 January 27 January 28 January 29
February	Braille Challenge President's Day	February 5 February 15
March	Board of Trustees Meeting State In-Service Day (AER Conference) WSSB/WSD Lions Carnival Spring Break	March 5-6 March 12 March 25 March 29-April 2
April	End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Quarter Northwest Environmental Science Camp	April 9 April 26-29
May	Board of Trustees Conference Call Career Fair Lions Track Meet Music Department-Program/Volunteer Recognition Memorial Day	May 6 May 19 May 20 May 27 May 31

**WSSB  
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of  
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National Federation of the Blind of WA: Mike Freeman, 3101 NE 87 Ave., Vancouver, WA 98662, (360) 576-5965  
Parent Representative: Jean Curtis, 4317 NE 66 Ave., T233, Vancouver, WA 98661, (360) 433-2643

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