



*Supporting infants,  
children, and youth with  
combined vision and  
hearing loss*

# The Beacon

Newsletter of  
The Wisconsin DeafBlind Technical Assistance Project  
Volume 2, Issue 1: April 2012



## Upcoming Regional Meetings for Families

### Pool Party, May 5, 2012 at the Saukville YMCA, Port Washington!

On Saturday, May 5, 2012 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, a team of physical therapists will teach us how to use pool time to expand your child's horizons—and senses! This is a great way to have family time and to get ready for summer. You will leave feeling refreshed and more comfortable with being in the water with your deaf-blind child with lots of new ideas for family time in the water this summer. Light lunch and refreshments are included. Parents should come prepared to spend time in the water with their child. We will have time for free waterplay for the whole family also and activities for siblings while the PTs are presenting.

Please register ASAP. Preregistration is required by April 20. See the flyer that is included with this newsletter for registration information.



### Intervention Strategies Using the Therapy Ball, June 16 at the Portage Best Western!

On Saturday, June 16, 2012 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, Barbara Hypes, a pediatric physical therapist and author, will be demonstrating and offering assistance to families on the use of the therapy ball to improve range of motion, joint mobility, muscle strengthening, and enhancing reactions to weight shift, issues that are often experienced by our deaf-blind children. This presentation will be repeated in the Rice Lake area in October for our families in northern Wisconsin. Families who attend will leave with their own therapy ball. Light lunch, refreshments, and activities for siblings is included.

Preregistration is required and ends June 9. A flyer with more information is included with this newsletter.

### What Do Pool Parties And Therapy Balls Have To Do With Your Deaf-Blind Child?

There are so many benefits for your whole family. Here are just a few:

#### Water Fun

- \*\* The warm water of an indoor pool relaxes stiff muscles and increases blood flow
- \*\* Water fun is great exercise for the cardiovascular system
- \*\* Increased freedom of movement
- \*\* Family members of all ages and abilities can participate and enjoy



#### Therapy Balls

- \*\* Strengthen core muscles
- \*\* Improve balance and flexibility
- \*\* Increase blood circulation
- \*\* Helps develop correct posture
- \*\* Sensory integration

## All Children CAN Read...let us show you how!

By Jodi, parent of Liam

# Link Lites

I am always on the lookout for ways to help my son. I have read a lot of great articles and some so-so ones that have good information but not practical for my situation. I visit different websites to try to get as much information to help my son reach his full potential but often get frustrated and feel overwhelmed trying to put the plans into action.

While peeking around on the National Consortium on Deaf-blindness website, I stumbled upon this link: [literacy.nationaldb.org](http://literacy.nationaldb.org). All I can say is, wow! This is a wonderful resource for any parent or professional who works with a deafblind child.

Literacy is a right for all individuals because it expands communication and understanding but goes well beyond the typical reading and writing concept. Acquiring these skills for all children, no matter how significant their issues, are a matter of “how” and not “if” or “when”. This site not only provides the factual information but provides practical tactics to take the necessary steps towards reaching these goals. I don’t have to try to come up with a plan of action by myself but can follow their well-crafted strategies! These strategies are things I can do with my son now and have concrete goals to work towards.

The site is divided into several sections:

**About the Website**  
**Shifting Perspectives**  
**Building a Foundation**  
**Early Emergent Literacy**  
**Emergent Literacy**  
**Writing**



Each section has links to hands-on strategies, practical ideas to show you how to accomplish this, not just the “why” but the “how”.

ALL children CAN read...let us show you how!



STRATEGIES | PRACTICAL EXAMPLES | RESOURCES

Designed to give children with deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities and complex challenges expanded learning opportunities.

At the end of each section, there are links to Related Skills, Examples, Video Clips, Articles, and Additional Resources. I can watch a video of the strategy to see it in action and know exactly what I am to do! So, I can not only read about how to incorporate a new strategy but the site shows you how to do it in easy steps. There are also links to important concepts so if you are not sure what is meant by a particular phrase, you can just click on the underlined phrase to get clarification.

The site is very well laid out and easy to use with easy access to information. I would definitely recommend this site to other parents and professionals that work with their child.



<http://literacy.nationaldb.org>



## Annual Family Conference 2012

Submitted by Jodi, parent of Liam



Robbie is a member of the Texas Deafblind Project and brings with her over 40 years of expertise in working with deaf-blind children. She presented two seminars at the recent Family Conference in Appleton. These are a few of Jodi's notes and observations after attending The Importance of Communication and Effective Communication Utilizing Tangible Objects.

Hands have three purposes: they are a deafblind child's eyes, tools, and way to communicate. Communication is the trickiest of these functions. Robbie compared Deaf-blind children to a gated community. In order to gain access, one needs to know the code and unfortunately this code can change from day to day in some children. All children communicate but how they communicate is different for each child. It is critical to form a trusting relationship with the child so one can determine what will be the best method for that child. Objects provide children with an alternative form of communication. These objects are used to gain information about activities, people, and places, making choices and/or telling others his message.

Families and teachers need to work together to choose objects which will have the most meaning for the child's needs. How the object is introduced is very important. This process may take time and should be done according to the child's time frame, not ours. Offer the object and wait to see if he keeps it or throws it. Throwing is not a bad thing and should be encouraged and can be turned into a game with the child.

Throwing is a way that your child's body is getting the sensory input it craves and is a very necessary part of the lives of deaf-blind children. Let him touch and feel the object; if he wants to put it down, let him and then attempt to give to him again. If he gets upset, it may be better to wait and try again later. Encourage exploration by helping him to feel the object and name the interesting aspects of the object (i.e. texture, does it have lights, is it heavy, does it make any sound?). Eventually, you can show him how the object is used with a hand under hand technique but it will take several attempts before you can do this. Move behind the child and take your arm and go under his hand to help guide him to the object. To sustain engagement with his hands, tap his hand and make a fun and silly game out of it.



As the child associates the object with a daily activity, person, or place, the number of objects used can be increased over time. When the child understands that the objects represent something that is about to happen, additional objects can be added. Objects can be used with children in a number of different ways: daily calendars boxes, portable systems, etc. Robbie also stated how important it is to have this information included in the accommodations section of the child's IEP. This lends to consistency between the family and all working with the child. Consistency is vital to success and effective communication!

**SAVE THE DATE! Next year's Family Conference will be held on March 8-10, 2013 in Appleton.**

## Calendar of Events

### \*\*Regional Meetings Scheduled\*\*

- May 5: Pool Party at Saukville YMCA,  
Port Washington  
June 16: Therapy Ball Class at Portage Best Western

**See flyer inside newsletter for details.**



### *From our families:*

*Thank you so very much for the scholarship towards the recent State Family Conference. We are truly appreciative of the support so that we were able to attend this wonderful opportunity.*

*Parents of L.A.*

## Spread the Word

### Utah State Training Offered this Fall

An online training program in deaf-blindness is now available through Utah State University (USU).

This training program is recognized as one of the top ten online courses in the country. WDBTAP is again extending the opportunity to take this coursework to selected professionals and paraprofessionals who work directly with deaf-blind children in Wisconsin.

Applicants chosen for the training will be reimbursed for the noncredit option fees upon successful completion of the courses.

Are you interested in participating? Go online and at [www.wdbtap.wi.gov](http://www.wdbtap.wi.gov), download and submit the training form. Applications are due by July 1, 2012. Participants will be selected and notified by August 1, 2012.



You can now find us on Facebook!



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