



PARENT TO PARENT



FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Volume 1, Issue 1

A quarterly newsletter from the KSB Family Support Center

August 2014

Family Retreat to be Held September 19-21

Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Outreach, in collaboration with the Center for Courageous Kids will be hosting a Family Retreat on September 19–21, 2014 for families of children who are blind or visually impaired. The Retreat will be held at the Center for Courageous Kids campus in Scottsville, KY.

This year’s retreat theme is “The Sounds of Music” and will focus on bringing the enjoyment of music to the children. Guest presenters are Bobby Falk, percussion, Wade Honey, piano, and Lee Puckett, guitar. Children will be learning basics of music and will perform in a talent show to end the retreat.

As always, there will be numerous activities for families to participate in while at the retreat. There will be horseback riding, swimming, fishing, and bowling and other activities scheduled as time permits.

Registration is open and you must register through the Center for Courageous Kids website. The address is www.courageouskids.org.

For additional information contact Mitch Dahmke at 502-897-1583 ext. 7104 or mitch.dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us.

**The Center for
Courageous Kids**



We Prescribe Fun!
www.courageouskids.org

From the Desk of Connie Hill

By: Connie Hill, Certified Low Vision Therapist

What is low vision?

“A visual impairment after correction, but with the potential for use of available vision, with or without optical or non-optical compensatory visual strategies, devices and environmental modifications, to plan and perform daily tasks.” (Looking to Learn, 2011).

The signs of Low Vision:

- Difficulty recognizing a familiar face
- Difficulty reading—print appears broken, distorted or incomplete
- Difficulty seeing objects and potential hazards such as steps, curbs, walls, uneven surfaces and furniture.

LOW VISION	2
TALKING PRESCRIPTION	3
FINGERREADER	3
WEBSITES OF INTEREST	4
BLIND SERVICES	5

Continued on page 2

Family Support Center Upcoming Activities

The KSB Family Support Center has released a schedule of upcoming activities that are scheduled through the end of December. We hope to see large turnouts this year. The activities are as follows.

August 19, 6:30 PM

KSB Families Meet the New KSB Staff Taco Bar Dinner.

September 19-21

Family Retreat at The Center for Courageous Kids in Scottsville, KY.

October 16

Family soup supper for families of children who are visually impaired in the KVEC Co-op.

October 21, 6:30 PM

KSB family soup supper. Program follows.

November 13

Envisioning the Future for Big East Co-op.

December 15, 6:30 PM

KSB Family Dinner

Additional activities are in the planning stages. If you have any questions about activities in your Educational Co-op region, please call Mitch Dahmke, 502-897-1583 Ext. 7104 or email at mitch.dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us.



Continued from page 1:
**: From the Desk of
 Connie Hill**

General Facts Regarding Students with Low Vision:

- Using the eyes does not injure or harm them. Encourage the student to use his/her eyes since greater efficiency can only be developed through the use of the eyes for visual tasks unless a doctor has indicated otherwise.
- The use of glasses cannot help improve visual acuity for all eye conditions. Glasses may be worn to reduce glare and help with fatigue.
- Some students can read ordinary type with ease; others may require large print, a hand-held magnifier, or a closed circuit TV.
- The visually impaired child should be able to participate in most recreational activities except for those that require good visual acuity. (i.e. dodgeball).
- Eyes cannot be "strained" but may tire quickly. An activity that allows the student to change focus is often helpful and appreciated.
- Holding materials close to the eyes will not harm them. Allow the student to position materials at a distance he/she chooses.

Continued on page 4



Walgreens Launches Nationwide Program Offering Talking Prescription Devices

Walgreens press release 6-3-2014

Walgreens announced the launch of a nationwide program offering talking prescription devices to customers with visual impairments. The initiative introduces a new service that complements other accessible prescription information Walgreens currently provides.

Walgreens is the first in the industry to offer this exclusive talking prescription device, called the Talking Pill Reminder, at its retail locations chain-wide. The device attaches to prescription containers and will be provided free of charge with prescription medications that Walgreens dispenses to its pharmacy customers who are blind or who have visual impairments. The Talking Pill Reminder can be recorded to speak the information on the customer's prescription medication label, and also has an audible alarm to remind patients when to take a medication.

The initiative is the result of a collaboration between Walgreens, The American Council of the Blind (ACB) and the ACB affiliates in California and Illinois. All partnering organizations praised the Walgreens announcement. California Council of the Blind President Donna Pomerantz said, "Standard prescription labels put customers who are blind at risk for mixing up medications or taking them incorrectly. For this reason, Walgreens initiative is a matter of basic safety, and we congratulate the company on its efforts in this important area."

Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky is Created

By Kathy Mullin, VIPS Education Coordinator

Blind Services Coalition of Kentucky (BSCK) is moving along with its mission of providing more comprehensive services to individuals and families with members who are blind or visually impaired. The coalition is made up of 30 individuals, representing 19 service agencies, educational institutions, and foundations. Membership is open to any person or group providing services to individuals of all ages.

BSCK is currently working on the wording of the proclamation declaring October as Blindness and Visual Impairment Awareness month in Kentucky. Along with that effort, planning is in place for White Cane Safety Day activities and the annual open house at the McDowell Center, both to take place in October. The coalition has recognized the need to produce brochures and to launch a website to help share information about the services provided collectively by the group.

BSCK meets quarterly, hosted at a different members' site, in an effort to learn more about the partners firsthand. Collaboration with the Vision Coalition of Greater Cincinnati has also been identified as a fruitful partnership.



Continued from page 2:
**: From the Desk of
 Connie Hill**

Understanding A Low Vision Student:

- The emotional needs of a low vision student are like those of any other. He/she wants to be liked by peers, teachers, and neighbors.
- Have the student explain his/her visual problem to you.
- So much of communication is non-verbal. Often a student with low vision is unable to recognize the expression on someone's face or figure out what has happened in a situation that is non-verbal. It is helpful if someone privately explains the situations to the student with low vision.
- Be aware of the students' frustration level since so much of learning and school is visual. It is easy for a student with poor acuity to become frustrated.

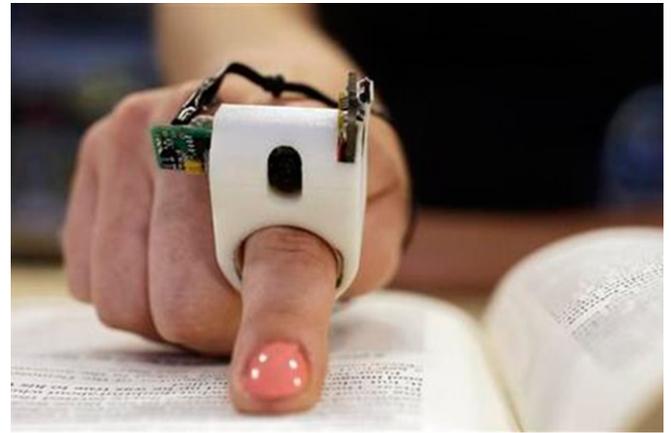
The information on your student is very valuable for you as a parent to help assist your student in all realms of their life. Low Vision is 24/7, not 8 o'clock to 3 o'clock. It's their life.

During this school year encourage your son/daughter to advocate for themselves in all settings using their abilities. Have them take pride in their accomplishments and keep striving to do their best. It will be a "win-win" for the both of you!!



Connie Hill, CLVT outside the Low Vision Clinic

Massachusetts Institute of Technology Develops the FingerReader



*The Associated Press July 10, 2014
 Cambridge, Massachusetts (AP)*

Scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are developing an audio reading device to be worn on the finger of people whose vision is impaired, giving them affordable and immediate access to printed words.

The so-called FingerReader, a prototype produced by a 3-D printer, fits like a ring on the user's finger, equipped with a small camera that scans text. A synthesized voice reads words aloud, quickly translating books, restaurant menus and other needed materials for daily living, especially away from home or office.

Reading is as easy as pointing the finger at text. Special software tracks the finger movement, identifies words and processes the information. The device has vibration motors that alert readers when they stray from the script, said Roy Shilkrot, who is developing the device at the MIT Media Lab.

For Jerry Berrier, 62, who was born blind, the promise of the FingerReader is its portability and offer of real-time functionality at school, doctors' offices and restaurants.

Berrier manages training and evaluation for a federal program that distributes technology to low income people in Massachusetts and Rhode Island who have lost their sight and hearing. He works from the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts.

"Everywhere we go, for folks who are sighted, there are things that inform us about the products that we are about to interact with. I want to be able to interact with those same products, regardless of how I have to do it," Berrier said.

Pattie Maes, an MIT professor who founded and leads the Fluid Interfaces research group developing the prototype, says the FingerReader is like "reading with the tip of your finger, and it's a lot more flexible, a lot more immediate than any solution that they have right now."

Developing the FingerReader has taken three years of software coding, experimenting with designs and working on feedback from a test group of visually impaired people. Much work remains before it is ready for the market, Shilkrot said, including making it work on cell-phones.

Shilkrot said developers believe they will be able to affordably market the FingerReader, but he could not yet estimate a price.

Current technology used in homes and offices offers cumbersome scanners that must process the desired script before it can be read aloud by character-recognition software installed on a computer or smartphone, Shilkrot said. The FingerReader would not replace Braille. Instead, Shilkrot said, the new device would enable users to access books and other materials that are not currently available in Braille.

Developers had to overcome challenges to help people with visual impairments move their reading fingers along a straight line of printed text that they could not see. Users also had to be alerted at the beginning and end of the reading material.

Their solutions? Audio clues in the software that processes information from the FingerReader and vibration motors in the ring.

The FingerReader can read papers, books, magazines, newspapers, computer screens and other devices, but it has problems with text on a touch screen, said Shilkrot.

That's because touching the screen with the tip of the finger would move text around, producing unintended results. Disabling the touch-screen function eliminates the problem, he said.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

THE CENTER FOR COURAGEOUS KIDS

www.courageouskids.org

To register for the KSB Family Retreat you must go to this website. Visit the website for additional retreats and camp offerings.

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

www.tsbvi.edu

This website, from one of the national leaders of schools for the blind and visually impaired, is filled with information for parent and teachers. You must check it out!

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

www.chs.ky.gov/commissionkids

The Commission for Children with Special Healthcare Needs provides diagnosis and treatment for certain disabling conditions (congenital or acquired).

KSB Family Support Center Family Retreat is September 19–21, 2014

**The Center for
Courageous Kids**



We Prescribe Fun!
www.courageouskids.org

REGISTER NOW!

Retreat for families with children who are blind or visually impaired at the Center for Courageous Kids in Scottsville, KY.

Registration may be completed at
www.courageouskids.org

Phone: 502-897-1583 Ext. 7104
Email: mitch.dahmke@ksb.kyschools.us

We're on the web!
www.ksb.kyschools.us

Kentucky School for the Blind
Family Support Center
1867 Frankfort Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40206