

# CONNECTION



Missouri School for the Blind  
3815 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis

## CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2013!



On Wednesday, May 29, MSB staff, family and friends proudly watched the processional of the Class of 2013 into the Samuel L. Green Auditorium. Dr. Susan Fitzpatrick, who retired from MSB at the end of the 2011-2012 school year, was the commencement speaker for the evening and offered the students hope, inspiration, encouragement and humor in her address. The five members of this year's graduating class have a variety of experiences, but all have worked incredibly hard to get here. In this article, we will take a look at each graduate and the path they have taken to get to where they are today.



Tabitha Jenkins is the Valedictorian of the Class of 2013. Tabitha has worked very hard to earn that honor in the 5 years she has attended MSB. While she excels in many of her subject areas, her favorite classes are Spanish, Braille, Math, English and Science – all of them actually! She admits that sometimes the work can

be frustrating, but she still enjoys her classes.

Tabitha is also an outstanding athlete. Extracurricular activities are something she says she missed out on while attending her previous school. When Tabitha started at MSB in 2008, she joined every sport and club that she could. She loves playing goalball and is sad about the possibility of not having the opportunity to play in college. Tabitha was also a critical member of both the track and swimming teams this past year - the teams took home the conference championship in both of those sports for the first time since the 1980s. She was also one of three girls on the wrestling team this year.

Besides athletics, Tabitha has also participated in the Library Cat Club, the High School Book Club, Braille Readers are Leaders, the Braille Challenge and Tech-It-Up a Notch. Tabitha says besides the opportunity and encouragement to participate in extracurriculars, her favorite thing about MSB is the available technology. In addition to Braille technology, MSB offers a

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wide variety of text-to-speech technology as well as equipment and software to increase size and contrast in type for those with low vision.

Outside of school, Tabitha enjoys reading, writing poetry, listening to music and exercising. This summer will be a busy one for Tabitha as she will be attending the Youth Leadership Academy held at the University of Missouri – Columbia, as well as the National Beta Convention in Mobile, AL.

Tabitha will return to MSB in the fall to participate in the LIFE Independent Learning Program with dual enrollment at St. Louis Community College at Forest Park.



Alyssa Henson is the 2013 Salutatorian. Alyssa came to MSB at the end of last September, when she was 17. Although she was mainstreamed when she lived in Illinois, she wanted to come to MSB when her family moved to Missouri because of the residential program offered. Her IEP team agreed that with college in her near future, the experience of living away from home would be beneficial for Alyssa. She was also very interested in the Orientation and Mobility instruction, as well as instruction in Activities of Daily Living (ADL) offered at MSB. Although she had received lessons in Orientation and Mobility at her previous school, she wanted the experience of navigating an urban setting and the opportunity to familiarize herself with public transportation. Her IEP team agreed that this setting would be beneficial to prepare for her transition into college.

Alyssa didn't have many athletic opportunities at her previous school, so when she came to MSB, she jumped in with both feet – literally! Alyssa was a member of the girls' 2012-13 swim team which won first place in the NCASB conference! Alyssa's other extracurriculars included the goalball team and the high school reading club.

While Alyssa's time at MSB may be shorter than some of her peers, she packed in as much experience as possible. Alyssa says she will mostly miss the friends she has made and her MSB teachers.

This summer will be a busy one for Alyssa. The things she is looking forward to most are receiving a guide dog and beginning school at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Alyssa hopes to be a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) and NIU has a strong program. When she visited, she was also impressed with their accessibility resource center.

In addition to preparing for college, Alyssa will be traveling to Los Angeles, CA to compete in the National Braille Challenge. Alyssa scored higher than thousands of other students across the country to become one of the top 60 finalists in the

National Braille Challenge. After competing at the National Braille Challenge, Alyssa will travel to Rochester Hills, MI to attend three weeks of instruction at Leader Dogs for the Blind. Alyssa has enjoyed the opportunity of getting to work with Susie, the guide dog of MSB teacher Patti Schonlau. Susie was trained by Leader Dogs for the Blind, so Alyssa is excited to have a head start in the program.



Cortez Dillworth came to MSB when he was just 5 years old. Cortez is excited about what his future holds, but hasn't quite decided on what he wants to pursue next. His favorite thing to do when he is at home is listening to the Ricky Smiley morning show on the radio. His favorite things about MSB are the classes he took while enrolled in the LIFE (Learning Independence From Experience) program, as well as the group time he got to spend with Ms. Campbell, the guidance counselor. Cortez says he is going to miss riding the yellow bus, his friends and "Miss Carla," one of his LIFE instructors.



Jesse Hicks came to MSB when he was 18 to study in the LIFE program. He says that his favorite class at MSB was mobility and outside of class, he enjoyed his time participating in the Library Cat Club, the Horticulture Club and intramural sports. At home, Jesse enjoys playing games and music on the computer, watching TV and going to swimming lessons. Jesse has been officially hired by the Boone Center workshop and is anxiously awaiting his start date. Jesse says he will miss his teachers and fellow classmates at MSB the most.



Samantha Torres came to MSB when she was 18 years old also to study in the LIFE program. After being home schooled for 11 years, Samantha has enjoyed learning various activities of daily living skills, including cooking for herself and learning to do laundry. Sam also says she is going to miss her friends and the staff of MSB the most, but is looking forward to being home more often and starting life on her own. She hopes to get a job in a local workshop after graduation.

The motto the Class of 2013 chose is "Continuing to reach for the stars." When Mr. Don Gerard, president of the MSB Advisory Board, presented diplomas to the students, he said it was clear that each and every one of them intended to continue striving to reach their greatest potential. We are very proud of all of our graduates and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors!

## LION LUAU A ROARING SUCCESS!

On April 14, 2013, MSB hosted its annual Lions' Appreciation Night. On this night, we invite Lions from across the area to come to our school so students and staff can illustrate the impact the Lions make. The Lions Club International has more than 1.35 million members and serves communities in more than 200 countries and geographic areas. We are honored that there are hundreds of Lions who have contributed time, effort and money to the Missouri School for the Blind and we will be forever grateful!

Fundraising efforts made by the Lions have contributed to facility renovations, state-of-the-art technology upgrades, clothing and other necessities for students, extracurricular activities for students and much, much more! We thank the Lions for enabling MSB to provide students with such a well-rounded school experience that includes academics, expanded core curriculum, athletics, social development and independent living skills.

This year's theme for Lions' Night was "Lion Luau." Every Lion was greeted with an aloha and colorful lei to set the tone for the evening. Students worked weeks ahead of time preparing a special musical program under the guidance of music instructor Patti Schonlau that told the history of the ukulele. Students and staff guided Lions on a tour of the school and highlighted the state-of-the-art science lab, the latest in assistive technology for the visually impaired, The L.I.F.E. Apartments (Learning Independence from Experience), athletic facilities and other key areas. More than 75 items were donated and made for a very exciting raffle for the Lions to participate in and there was also a photo booth on hand for everyone's enjoyment. With the temperatures cooperating that weekend, it was as though MSB had been transported to Hawaii! Thanks to the many who helped raise almost \$9,000 for MSB and to all who made the Lion Luau a successful evening.



### MSB WELCOMES ALUMNI BACK TO CAMPUS

On Friday, May 17, 2013, MSB alumni returned to their alma mater for a weekend of fun activities. The weekend began with a pizza party and trivia night. On Saturday, guests enjoyed an outing to the Saint Louis Zoo and in the evening, more than 50 former students attended a banquet and variety show. This year's "Alumni of the Year" was awarded to Linda Kinkelar ('70). Kathey Wheeler, Class of '63, received her 50-year plaque. A number of former staff also attended, including Eugene Edwards, Bob McQuie, Louiedean Ray and David Wixom. Thank you to all who attended!

### FORMER MSB FACULTY TO BE INDUCTED INTO THE USABA HALL OF FAME

The United States Association of Blind Athletes (USABA) has announced that Tom Culliton, former long-time MSB

faculty member, will be recognized for his great contributions by being inducted into the USABA Hall of Fame. Tom served many different roles at MSB, including athletic director, and ended his tenure as the Assistant Superintendent. He also served on the board of the North Central Schools for the Blind Athletic Association. In 1988, Tom was the assistant goalball coach at the Seoul, Korea Paralympic Games where the women's goalball team took home the silver medal. Tom has dedicated his life to providing recreational and athletic opportunities for people who are visually impaired and networking with schools throughout the state to be sure every eligible student has the opportunity to know the joy of competition and teamwork. Tom joins five other individuals and one team who will be inducted into the Hall of Fame at various events over the next four years. Congratulations Tom!



## MSB STUDENT BEATS OUT THOUSANDS TO GO TO NATIONAL BRAILLE CHALLENGE

Congratulations to the 2013 Braille Challenge National Finalists, who were selected out of more than 1,000 preliminary round contestants from 39 states and 3 Canadian provinces. These 60 Challengers are invited to compete in the Braille Challenge® Finals in Los Angeles on Saturday, June 22, 2013. Finalists represent the 12 top-ranking scores from each of the 5 age groups. Contest scores are checked by transcribers at Braille Institute then ranked by the highest scores earned. Missouri School for the Blind is proud to announce that THREE of these finalists are from the regional competition held here at MSB on February 28, 2013. Also, congratulations to MSB Senior Alyssa Henson who is a top national finalist in the Varsity category!

(Varsity) Alyssa Henson, Missouri School for the Blind; (Junior Varsity) Kaitlyn Hall; (Apprentice) Richard Tienter.



*Henson*

*Hall*

*Tienter*

## SWIM TEAM BREAKING RECORDS!

Congratulations to the MSB Women's Swim Team! The Lady Mules brought home the Championship trophy in the NCASB Swim Conference meet in Nashville, TN – the first swim championship the ladies have won since 1983! Individual gold medalists Jill McBroom and Tabitha Jenkins were joined by teammates Alex Richardson, Dionna Towns, Tiondra Pollard, Kathryn Hurd, Jessica Johnson and Jade Scallion. The Lady Mules swam record times to set personal bests on their way to the first place trophy. The MSB Men's swim team also fared well in the



meet setting new personal best times and included an individual bronze medal for first time swimmer Damon Tyson. Together, the MSB Men's and Women's teams added combined points and placed 3rd overall in the meet! The MSB men and women worked hard all season and it showed in the championships. Congratulations!

## FORENSICS TEAM A TEAM OF WINNERS!

Congratulations to the 2013 MSB Forensics Team! This year, a tremendous effort was made by all participants and every team member won a medal! Breck Campbell - Open Event, Storytelling 2nd place; Josh Starner & Amber Lacey - Duo, 3rd place; Kathryn Hurd - Serious Prose Reading, 3rd place; Amber Lacey - Great Speeches Reading, 3rd place; Tabitha Jenkins - Poetry Reading, 3rd place. Congratulations on a job well done!

## MSB INTRAMURALS SHOW OFF ATHLETICISM AND SPORTSMANSHIP AT SPECIAL OLYMPICS TRACK MEET

On Tuesday, May 14, the MSB intramural track athletes competed in a Special Olympics Track Meet at DeSmet High School. Each athlete was assigned a high school 'Buddy' from DeSmet who stayed with the athlete the whole meet and helped him or her as needed, including getting them to their events on time, helping with lunch and playing games at the 'Olympic Village'. The MSB students had a great time and won many ribbons. Our relay team, which included Zyshaun Cross-Williams, Zach Phelps, Tyler Baty and Sirria Brooks, received a third place ribbon for that event. In addition, Zyshaun received first place for the shot put and second place in both the 100 meter run and the standing long jump. Tyler received second place for the running long jump and third place for the softball throw. Sirria received first place for the standing long jump; LeShay Culton received first place in the softball



throw and third place in the 25 meter run; Noah O'Neal received first place for the standing long jump and third place in both the softball throw and the 50 meter run. Zach received first place in the softball throw and third place in the standing long jump. Congratulations to the MSB athletes! You have made us proud!

### MSB STUDENT GETS BLUE RIBBON IN REGIONAL SCIENCE FAIR



Congratulations to MSB student Breck Campbell! On Saturday, May 4, Breck was awarded a blue ribbon at the St. Louis Science Fair hosted at Queeny Park in St. Louis, MO. Breck spent many hours on her project "The Effect of Competition on Sports Performance." The St. Louis Science Fair is hosted by the Academy of Science and sponsored by Monsanto Fund and MEMC. Approximately 170 schools from across the St. Louis region participated in this event. Congratulations Breck!

### STUDENTS GET TO CLOWN AROUND!



A big thank you to the First Capitol Lions Club for donating tickets to the Moolah Shiner Circus, as well as money for students to get drinks and snacks! The children who attended on Thursday, March 21, had a wonderful time. It was the perfect beginning to their spring break! Thank you Lions!

### ST. LOUIS STORY TELLING FESTIVAL

On Thursday, May 2, 2013, the Missouri Botanical Gardens hosted the annual St. Louis Storytelling Festival. As a reward for participating in the statewide reading award programs for elementary and middle school students - Show Me Readers, Mark Twain and Truman - MSB students enjoyed time off campus to listen to dynamic storytellers and then lunch at the Sassafras Cafe at the Botanical Garden. They also had time to explore



the Children's Garden and more while they were there. Great job girls and boys!

### LIBRARY CAT CLUB AWARDS

On Wednesday, May 8, MSB students enjoyed the annual Pizza Party in the Park at Tower Grove Park! This party is hosted by the MSB Library Cat Club. Students who participate in the Library Cat Club earn points for reading and reporting on books throughout the year. All students who meet their reading goals for the semester get to attend the pizza party in the park. Great job Library Cat Club members!



### HIGH SCHOOL READING CLUB MOVIE NIGHT

Eight members of the MSB High School Book Club (HBC) participated in the 2012-13 Gateway Readers Award Program this year. Students read or listened to at least 3 books from a list of 15 selected by a special panel of members of the Missouri Association of School Librarians. Many of our students listened to at least half of the books on the list before voting for their favorite book. On May 15, as a reward for their participation, HBC members finished the school year with a pizza and movie night in the MSB Library Media Center.

### TORNADO RELIEF

MSB staff joined in a tornado relief effort sponsored by Durham School Bus Services to collect supplies for the victims of the tornado in Moore, OK. In just one day, the staff of MSB collected two large bins of items, including diapers, infant formula, bottled water, sports drinks, work gloves and individually wrapped snacks. Durham transported supplies collected directly to Moore. Our hearts go out to the victims and we thank Durham for including us in this effort.





# DANCE AWAY WITH MY HEART...

"Dance Away With My Heart" was the theme to this year's Junior/Senior Prom at MSB. On Thursday, May 9, students had pictures taken on campus before heading to the Genesis Banquet Center in south St. Louis County for a night of dinner and dancing.

This year's prom king and queen were Michael Babusa and Tabitha Jenkins. Students had a great time dressing to the nine's and cutting loose on the dance floor!



## JUNE

15-22	National Beta Convention in Mobile, AL

## JULY

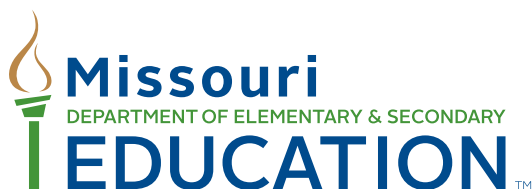
8-19	STEM Session I - Recycle City
22- August 2	STEM Session II - Robotics Academy

## AUGUST

20-23, 26	Professional Development
27	First Day of School

## SEPTEMBER

2	Labor Day - No School
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