

C O N S U L T A N T S'

O R N E R



SD School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

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We are dedicating this edition of the Consultants' Corner newsletter to our dear friend and co-worker Riki Nitz. Many of the articles and quotes in this newsletter were written, and gathered by Riki; always thinking ahead!

Notice the clip art throughout the newsletter as many are depicting the things Riki loved like cats, music, books, etc.

The quotes placed throughout the newsletter are also from Riki's vast collection of sayings and wise pieces of advice.

We miss Riki a great deal and she will always hold a special place in our hearts.

*SD Outreach Vision Consultants
Indira Dillon
Amy Scepaniak
Julie Van Dover*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SD Special Education Conference
Rapid City, SD
March 20-22, 2011

Focus on Success Conference
Pierre, SD
April 4-6, 2011

AER Dakotas Chapter Conference
Grand Forks, ND
April 28-29, 2011

EVERYDAY LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Below are some suggested activities that are simple, cheap, and don't take much time. Activities are taken from everyday events in our lives that are easy to access. Children that are visually impaired need to have a lot more hands-on experiences to help them learn.

November

- ☛ What is lint? Collect some lint from the washer and dryer; use a lint roller or brush to take it off clothes.
- ☛ Water Play...How many cups to fill a big bowl? A little bowl?
- ☛ Look for a thawed bird, like a turkey. Show how to prepare for the pan/cooking.
- ☛ Thanksgiving....fold napkins for dinner.
- ☛ Buy something at a convenience store. Buy the same thing at a supermarket. Compare.

December

- ☛ Find pencils around the house and sharpen them.
- ☛ Make hot chocolate. Add marshmallows. What happened to the them?
- ☛ Look at holiday lights and decorations.
- ☛ Wrap a present for a friend. Keep it secret.

January

- ☛ Put a wet towel outside. Once it freezes, talk about how it feels. What happens when it melts?
- ☛ Play in the snow. Where does the snow come from?
- ☛ Look through the fresh fruit sections of a store. Buy some for a snack.
- ☛ Play in boxes. What can you pretend with the boxes?

For more ideas or to borrow the complete set of Everyday Activities Calendar, contact your Outreach Vision Consultant. Everyday Activities Calendar is available from APH (American Printing House).

GIFT IDEAS

As the holidays rapidly approach many parents and other family members wonder what kind of toy would be fun and appropriate for their child with a visual impairment. Toys don't have to be designed for a blind child to be fun and meaningful to the child. Many toys on the regular market are entirely suitable for children who are blind .

Look for toys that:

- ☛ Promote movement and exploration.
- ☛ Promote awareness of people, places, and things.
- ☛ Encourage communication with others.
- ☛ Provide opportunities for social and emotional growth.
- ☛ Stimulate children's intellect, imagination, and creativity.
- ☛ Build skills for recreational activities and sports.

Here are some guidelines to keep in mind when making those gift choices.

- ☛ Young children enjoy toys that make sound, play music, or talk.
- ☛ Toys that have bright and highly contrasting colors or have lights will be more visually appealing to those children who have low vision.
- ☛ Look for toys with simple patterns.
- ☛ Toys that have a variety of textures will be more interesting to explore, such as a busy box.
- ☛ Puzzles, building toys, and car sets help stimulate creative thinking and problem solving.
- ☛ Play dough, raised lined coloring books, and simple crafts develop creativity in all children.
- ☛ Choose toys that promote interaction with others, such as board games.
- ☛ All children like toys and games that are connected to technology. V-Tech and Leap Pad boards are entertaining and educational.
- ☛ Books open the world to your child and you can create story boxes to go with the books.

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HOW TO USE BUMP DOTS TO MAXIMIZE ACCESSIBILITY

by Laura Legendary, From FRED'S HEAD – 3/29/10

Whether you are a person with a slight visual impairment, have low vision, or no vision, you'll find that these tiny helpers can make tasks at work or home more accessible. What are they? You may not have realized it, but even if you have no vision loss at all, you've been using them for most of your life. "Bump dots," also called "high marks," are raised bumps found on keyboard key caps, usually on the first fingers of the PC keyboard home row, as well as on the five or center key of a ten key numeric keypad. They are simply tactile locators that can help you orient yourself to the keypad more quickly. You have probably noticed them on ATM machines, telephones and calculators. However, for a person who is blind, or who has low vision, high marks can be used almost anywhere in your home or workplace.

There are a number of manufacturers of these tactile dots, and they are available in a variety of sizes and colors. They can be as large as one-half inch in diameter, or as small as a Braille dot. You can find them in black, blue, or fluorescent neon brights. Some are even clear. Usually, they are made of some sort of resin or plastic, and you buy them in packages of small sheets from which you can simply peel off the adhesive dots when you need them. How can you use them to assist you around the house? Since the dots are adhesive, they stick on most surfaces. Bump dots are a great way to locate, identify, and organize.

Here are some of the ways I use them:

- I stick them on each wash cycle indicator line on the washing machine, those that indicate gentle, heavy, or normal wash.
- Apply them to the high, medium, and low settings on the clothes dryer.
- Apply them to the indoor thermostat to indicate that perfect 68 to 72 degrees.
- I have them stuck to the oven temperature dial. One at 350 degrees, one at 400 degrees, and another at 450 degrees. Those are my most often used oven temps.
- I use them to differentiate between two of the same thing. One has a dot, the other doesn't. For example, if I know I have one of the items in black, another in white, the black one has the dot.
- I've even used them in hotel hallways to mark my door! It's faster than examining each Brailled door plaque; I just stick a dot on the wall preceding my door. Have you found one of my dots in your travels?
- Stick them on your electronics to indicate where a plug inserts. For example, "video in" has a dot, "video out" does not.
- I put a dot at the exact spot on the microwave dial that is the precise setting for the perfect bag of popcorn.

There is no limit as to how you can use these markers. You may be wondering how the dots can be used if the surface isn't smooth. Well, there is a solution for that, too. Dots can be purchased in a tube containing a soft putty or paste. Just squeeze out a drop onto a porous surface, a slanted surface, or even wallpaper. When the droplet dries, you have a tactile marker. With a bit of imagination and some creativity, you'll be "spot on" when trying to locate and identify items throughout your environment. Bump dots can make life a little easier for anyone who has vision loss. What are some of the clever or unique ways you've used them?

Laura Legendary is a speaker, author and educator specializing in disability awareness, accessibility, and assistive technology. Find Laura's Accessible Insights blog at <http://accessibleinsights.info/blog>.

"Believe, when you are most unhappy, that there is something for you to do in the world. So long as you can sweeten another's pain, life is not in vain."

Helen Keller

TEACHING THROUGH THE INTERNET

Chase, a young man who is visually impaired, lives in Nebraska and teaches many through the Internet. He enjoys electronics and devices from APH (American Printing House for the Blind). iPod Touch and Wii games are so popular with children and teens. Chase has found a way for kids with visual impairments and blindness to also enjoy these products. He has made his own "how to" videos and uploaded them to YouTube. Chase demonstrates using the iPod Touch/iPhone with the APH Refreshbraille Display and also demonstrates how to play Wii tennis. He has other helpful demonstrations as well. Hope you enjoy watching this energetic young man.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJWMRIEID1E>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_Sl1KxcMpU&feature=related

NATIONAL WHITE CANE DAY



On October 6, 1964 President Lyndon B. Johnson was authorized by a joint resolution of the Congress, HR 753, to sign into law "White Cane Safety Day." This resolution said: "Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives..., that the President is hereby authorized to issue annually a proclamation designating October 15 as White Cane Safety Day and calling upon the people of the United States to observe such a day with appropriate ceremonies and activities." Many students around the country celebrated their white canes on October 15th.

Check out the following site to see how one group of students showed their spirit: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACm2Jw4E9_E

LIONS FOUNDATION PROMOTES InfantSEE

InfantSEE®, a public health program, managed by Optometry's Charity™ - The AOA Foundation, is designed to ensure that eye and vision care becomes an integral part of infant wellness care to improve a child's quality of life. Under this program, AOA optometrists provide a comprehensive eye and vision assessment for infants within the first year of life regardless of a family's income or access to insurance coverage. The South Dakota Optometric Society is proud to have 75 members serve as InfantSEE providers. More than 380 InfantSEE assessments were given by these providers in 2009. But how do you get the InfantSEE message to more parents/guardians of babies? One great way is by partnering with the South Dakota Lions Foundation. During the week of the South Dakota State Fair, Lions volunteers from across the state handed out information on the InfantSEE program, as well as a list of all InfantSEE providers. These fantastic volunteers provided information to more than 500 eligible families during the week of the fair.



Lion Chuck Humphry shares InfantSEE information with a parent during the State Fair.

The SD Lions Foundation is interested in continuing to work with the South Dakota Optometric Society to share information on InfantSEE and other optometric programs to people across South Dakota.

LOTS OF DOTS

Counting 1 2 3

Book presents the numbers 0-30 and then integers of 10 up to 90. Each number has two pages:

- ✎ The first page features two or three large braille cells. The number is shown with its braille equivalent, along with reduced-size cells showing which dots need to be colored to complete the number.
- ✎ The second page shows the number of tactile graphic depictions of easy-to-find objects that begin with the same letter as the number, i.e., five fans, seventeen seashells. The objects are depicted in tactile graphic format.
- ✎ Attached to the inside front cover is a plastic stencil of three large braille cells. This can be folded over the blank pages, allowing the child to practice the braille cell configuration for the number by tracing or by using the accompanying foam braille chips. This book uses uncontracted braille. Recommended ages: Pre-K and up.

Learning My ABC's

Is an exciting raised-line coloring book designed for future large print and braille readers. It facilitates braille character recognition through repetitive activities designed for young children with visual impairments and multiple disabilities. Each letter of the alphabet has two pages: the first page features a jumbo braille cell, with six raised-line open circles; the second page shows the letter and a tactile graphic depiction of an easy-to-find object that begins with that letter. Attached to the inside front cover is a plastic stencil of the jumbo cell, which allows the student to practice a braille cell configuration by tracing or by using the accompanying foam braille chips. Grade Level: P and Up.

Coloring the Garden

This book presents a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and introduces picture building. The book begins with an empty garden. Each page adds a new feature, i.e., clouds, rain, seeds, and plants. Once the garden has grown, a new garden item is introduced on each page for the child to color. The enrichment activities are simple recipes that the child and parents/siblings/teachers can do together. The activities present daily living skills, such as planning, organizing, and food preparation. Trying new foods is encouraged. This book uses uncontracted and contracted braille, where applicable. To better enjoy this book, children should first complete *Lots of Dots: Learning My ABC's* and *Lots of Dots: Counting 123*. Grade Level: P and Up

For more ideas or to borrow the Lots of Dots, contact your Outreach Vision Consultant.



Raffle

This quilt made by the students and staff at the SDSBVI will be raffled off on December 21, 2010 with proceeds going to support student activities at the School. Each ticket is \$1 or 6 tickets for \$5. The raffle is being sponsored by the Arts and Special Activities Committee. If interested in purchasing tickets, contact Janel Ludwig at 605-626-2580 or email at ludwigj@sdsbvi.northern.edu.



Remembering a Friend and Colleague

Ricarda Kay "Riki" (Wetsch) Nitz, 62, was born May 24, 1948 in Billings, Montana and passed away on October 15, 2010 from a rare and aggressive form of cancer in Rapid City.



Riki impacted the lives of many. After receiving her Bachelor's degree from the university of Montana and her Master's degree from California State University, San Francisco, she worked with the blind and visually impaired for 38 years, including 21 years as an Outreach Vision Consultant for the S.D. School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, helping students in the western half of the state. She continued her education throughout her working years, receiving certification as a Low Vision Therapist and for Low Vision Rehabilitation from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry.

Riki honored God through her service to others. At the age of 14, she started playing organ in the church and remained an active organist and musician at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, as well as other area churches.



Riki had a lot of love for her family and friends, and is survived by her husband, Jerry, Rapid City; her daughter, Kellie (Ross) Gabrick, Minneapolis; parents, Gabe and Rethal Wetsch, sisters, Cinda (Rich) Robbins, Lynnís (Bob) Sorensen, and brother, David (Cindy) Wetsch, all of Billings; as well as nieces and nephews. Memorials may be sent in her honor to the S.D. School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Aberdeen, and Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Rapid City. Condolences may be conveyed to the family at www.caringbridge.org/visit/rikinitz or an online guestbook is available to sign at www.osheimschmidt.com.



**"I take happiness very seriously"
It is a creed, a philosophy, and
an objective."**

Helen Keller

- ☼ Things that define Riki...
- ☼ Green
- ☼ Toe Rings
- ☼ Finger Nails
- ☼ Recycled Paper
- ☼ Ice
- ☼ Milk-wouldn't touch it
- ☼ Blank Colored Paper
- ☼ Organized
- ☼ Grammatically correct
- ☼ Bags
- ☼ Stay up late...SLEEP in
- ☼ Fans
- ☼ Rag
- ☼ Books
- ☼ Reading
- ☼ Cats



*Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet;
 only through experiences of trial and suffering can
 the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition
 aspired, and success achieved!*

Helen Keller

GIFT IDEAS

(Continued from Page 2)

Helpful hints for a less stressful holiday:

- ☛ Remove toys from the original package before wrapping.
- ☛ Once all the ties have been removed, you can repackage the toy if you would like.
- ☛ Use large print or braille labels on presents so your child can “sneak a peek” at his presents.
- ☛ Have batteries already in the toy before the special day.
- ☛ Take a few minutes and be a kid again. Close your eyes and play with the toy so you will better understand it from your child’s perspective.
- ☛ Before discarding boxes and bows let your child play with them. Often times they turn out to be a favorite toy.

Resources for finding appropriate toys:

- ☛ www.afb.org/toyguide.asp
- ☛ <http://www.braillebookstore.com>
- ☛ <http://www.wonderbaby.org>
- ☛ <http://www.tsbvi.edu>
- ☛ <http://www.toysofdiscovery.com>

Happy Holidays!!!

If you have any questions, contact your Outreach Vision Consultant for more suggestions.

Aberdeen Area Family Support Group and SD NAPVI

The group met several times over the past few months. In March, staff provided information about how to download books onto the new Audio Book Readers and what services are available for students with visual impairments. In April, Amy Scepaniak and Julie Van Dover gave a presentation on “Tactile Experience Books” and parents were able to put together a book to take home. In June, a picnic was held with time for kids to play on the SDSBVI playground and for parents to network with each other. In August, the group met at the Aberdeen Aquatics Center for an evening of swimming, pizza, and connecting with others. On November 2, one of our Board Members Kelli Meister spoke about her experiences while attending the National Conference on Albinism. Parents will gather December 21, 2010 before the SDSBVI Christmas Program for the next meeting; topic to be determined.

SD NAPVI, a Chapter of the National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, was organized with the help of a mini-grant from the South Dakota Foundation for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Anyone can join the Chapter by simply becoming a member of NAPVI. The cost to become a member of NAPVI is \$40. If you would like more information about joining this group of parents, its activities, or possible steps in the development of a similar group in your area, contact Amy Scepaniak at 605-626-2580 or 1-888-275-3814 or by email at scepania@sdsbvi.northern.edu.

SD NAPVI Board Members

Co-Presidents: Karla Schlosser, 1424 N Arch, Aberdeen SD 57401, 605-225-5482, dschlossr@msn.com

Elaine Fritz, 500 Kyle Ave., Baltic SD 57003, 605-529-6052, efritz@siouxfalls.org

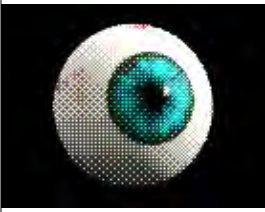
Co-Vice Presidents: Kelli Meister, 1228 Thomas Dr., Aberdeen SD 57402, 605-225-3432, rkmeister@nvc.net

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FOCUS ON THE EYE

ACHROMATOPSIA

Achromatopsia is a non-progressive visual disorder which is characterized by decreased vision, light sensitivity, nystagmus, and the absence of color vision. Achromatopsia is an inherited condition that affects approximately 1 in every 33,000 Americans. It is a condition found throughout the world with varying incidence.

There are two primary forms—complete achromatopsia and incomplete achromatopsia. Complete achromatopsia means “without color” and is defined as little or no function of the cone cells. Persons with complete achromatopsia are only able to perceive black, white, and shades of gray. Incomplete achromatopsia patients will have profound color impairment, but do have a small residual amount of color vision. They will also have slightly better visual acuity due to the presence of some functioning cone cells in the retina.

Achromatopsia is a recessive inherited condition. It requires both parents to contribute a gene in order for the condition to occur. This gives a family with one affected child a 25% (1 in 4) risk of each pregnancy carrying an affected offspring. All the offspring of an achromat may carry one gene for achromatopsia. In order to pass the condition onto their children, it would require having children with someone else carrying the same gene.

SIGNS / SYMPTOMS

The first signs may be the presence of nystagmus and light sensitivity with squinting in bright light. In persons with achromatopsia, the cone cells, which are light sensitive cells used during the day and which provide sharp visual acuity and color discrimination, are not functioning. Thus the only cells left are the rod cells. Rod cells are specialized low light cells which help with night vision. When the achromat goes into bright light, the visual system meant to be used only at night is suddenly overwhelmed. Achromats describe being “dazzled” and “blinded” by bright light. Achromats develop an aversion to bright daylight. To avoid problems, they often learn to work or play at night. Areas where bright lighting and shade come together can also pose many problems. Vision may be significantly impaired and achromats may not see what is in their path in the shaded area.

Visual acuity of a person with complete achromatopsia is typically 20/200. In the incomplete form of achromatopsia, the visual acuity may range from 20/60 to 20/100. This vision loss is stable throughout life, but does vary with exposure to bright lights as stated above. Near vision is better than distant vision.

Nystagmus is an involuntary rhythmic shaking or back and forth movement of the eyes that occurs when children are born with vision loss. Increases in the nystagmus can cause temporary decreases in vision. Stress can cause an increase in the movement and a further decrease in acuity. There may be a certain eye position or head tilt that slows the movement and allows better visual acuity. This unusual position should be encouraged and is called a “null point”.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of achromatopsia will be made by an eye doctor. A child may not be able to perform the screening tests to check for color blindness, but the presence of nystagmus, light sensitivity, and reduced vision will provide clues essential to the diagnosis. Children should also be checked for refractive errors (need for glasses). Prescribing glasses to correct refractive conditions such as far-sightedness (hyperopia), near-sightedness (myopia), and astigmatism can improve the vision somewhat, but will not restore normal levels of vision.

TREATMENT

An important new treatment for those with achromatopsia is the use of red central soft contact lenses. These contact lenses have a small red circle that when properly positioned looks like the pupil of the eye. These red contact lenses not only reduce the amount of light entering each eye, but allow primarily red light to enter the eye. Red light allows the remaining rods to function better. The contact lenses may or may not contain the patient’s prescription and are often fit under the patient’s eyewear. Thus, they can be worn during the day and removed in the evenings without the need for extra eyeglasses. Dark red or plum filters may also be used to control light sensitivity.

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FOCUS ON THE EYE

(Continued from Page 9)

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- ☛ Sunglasses, shields, visors, tinted lenses for light sensitivity.
- ☛ Controlling lighting and glare; closing blinds to decrease glare on the chalkboard and windows.
- ☛ Yellow acetate over print to improve contrast.
- ☛ Cutout window to expose only one word at a time to improve fixation.
- ☛ Dark tinted glasses or red glasses to help reduce the sensitivity to light and enhance visual functioning.
- ☛ Magnifying devices (low vision aids), as well as the use of large print books, may be helpful for reading.
- ☛ Black felt pen for marking and writing.
- ☛ Front seat placement away from the windows and allowing the student to go to the chalkboard when needed.
- ☛ Telescopes can be used for spotting signs and seeing faces in the distance.
- ☛ Allow the student to hold the reading material close to their eyes for more magnification and clarity.
- ☛ Students should be given extra time when taking tests.
- ☛ Closed circuit television systems (CCTV), which use video magnification, enlarge print onto a screen for ease when reading and writing.
- ☛ The child with achromatopsia finds the world full of color coding. School work is frequently color coded. For example, a child may be asked to determine how many red circles are present among the 10 on the page. Obviously, the student would be unable to perform this task. Also, coloring pictures and painting may be very difficult tasks to perform. It is crucial that color coding be eliminated from the child's education.
- ☛ With adequate help from teachers for the visually impaired, children with achromatopsia are usually able to attend public schools.
- ☛ More severely affected individuals may benefit from services available in schools specifically designated for the visually impaired.

**SOURCES**

<http://www.achromat.org>

<http://www.aapos.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=60>

FOCUS ON YOUR FUTURE

“FOCUS SESSIONS” are one week sessions that will focus on the Expanded Core Curriculum.

- ☛ SDSBVI Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired will:
- ☛ Focus on the Expanded Core Curriculum
- ☛ Provide concentrated sessions
- ☛ Teach students skills they can use in the school district classroom, and
- ☛ Provide tutoring to keep students current in their daily classroom assignments.

Additional Information:

- ☛ Students remain enrolled in their home school which retains ADA count.
- ☛ The program is free of charge for students who are visually impaired residing in South Dakota.
- ☛ LEA must provide transportation.
- ☛ Students may commute daily or reside in dorms on campus.
- ☛ Focus Sessions are offered the first week of each month during the school year.
- ☛ Individualized or small group instruction is designed to meet IEP vision specific needs.
- ☛ Focus Sessions are available for students K-12 who need work on the skills of blindness as addressed in the Expanded Core Curriculum.

Academic Curriculum
 +
Expanded Core Curriculum
 =
Free Appropriate
Public Education for
Students with Vision Loss

Expanded Core Curriculum

From Insight eNews, Perkins School for the Blind

Every student is expected to leave high school with a strong grasp of “core” subjects like math, language arts, science, and history. But in order to master these subjects, and to eventually live and work independently, students who are blind or visually impaired must learn an additional set of skills known as the “expanded core curriculum.” Essential life skills including social interaction, independent living, career education, and communication modes such as braille, must be taught alongside basic academics. For a student who is blind, learning about world geography from books is not enough. That student must also learn orientation and mobility skills and practice using a white cane for safe, independent travel. The expanded core curriculum empowers students with disabilities to access their education and make their own choices throughout life.

The Nine Components of the Expanded Core Curriculum

Compensatory and functional academic skills, including communication modes: Compensatory skills involve the adaptations necessary for accessing the core curriculum, which can include: braille, tactile symbols, sign language, and recorded materials.

Orientation and Mobility: Skills to orient children who are visually impaired to their surroundings and travel skills to enable them to move independently and safely in the environment.

Social Interaction Skills: Since nearly all social skills are learned by observation of the environment and people, this is an area where students with vision loss need careful, conscious, and explicit instruction.

Independent Living Skills: This area includes the tasks and functions people perform in daily life to optimize their independence - skills such as personal hygiene, food preparation, money management, and household chores.

Recreation & Leisure Skills: Skills to ensure students' enjoyment of physical and leisure time activities, including making choices about how to spend leisure time.

Career Education: Students with vision loss benefit most from an experiential learning approach. Structured visits to community sites and discussions with people who perform various jobs, enable them to understand concepts and specific skills that are needed to be successful in those jobs. Considering the national rate of unemployment or underemployment of working-age adults who are blind is 70% -75%, this area needs attention throughout the school years to help students with vision loss develop marketable job skills.

Assistive Technology: Assistive technology is a powerful tool that can enable students with vision loss to overcome some traditional barriers to independence and employment.

Sensory Efficiency Skills: Skills that help students use the senses – including any functional vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste – to access skills related to literacy and concept development.

Self-Determination: Skills to enable students to become effective advocates for themselves based on their own needs and goals.



Blind Children's Center

The Blind Children's Center in Los Angeles, CA, is a wonderful resource for books and videos. The books and videos cover a range of topics, from playing to eating to parenting. To order materials and learn more about the Blind Children's Center, visit their web site: www.blindchildrenscenter.org





SD School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

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PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH STAFF, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

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