“From the Director’s Desk” By: Beth Kennedy

Sure, the picture is meant to be funny, but it is not far from the truth! As many of you know, Nicole Bruce, our Family Support Coordinator, resigned to take a job closer to home. She has more time with her family, is making more money, and is working in her chosen field (counseling). It is impossible to be upset with her for leaving! Her last day was February 13, 2010, and I worked diligently to fill her position from the moment I received her letter of resignation. I am pleased to announce that Jennifer Bigelow-Stambaugh was hired as the new Family Support Coordinator! She started with the project on Monday, April 12, 2010. Jennifer jumped right in, tackling activities around two of our initiatives, Person-Centered Planning and Family Leadership. Watch for a photo of and bio on Jennifer in the summer issue. I am now beginning the work of chipping away at the piles on my desk! Enjoy this issue- it is filled with great information!
Federal DeafBlind Census 2009 is underway!

We are currently in the process of completing our Annual Federal Register of Students Who Are DeafBlind (i.e., the Federal DeafBlind Census) for 2009, and we need your help.

As Michigan’s designated DeafBlind project, we are required each year by the U.S. Department of Education to collect information on all students (age birth – 26) in the state of Michigan who possess a combined vision and hearing loss. Students previously reported on our census must have their information verified and/or updated each year. Your assistance in providing us with student updates helps to ensure that our Michigan census count is accurate and that Michigan continues to receive adequate funding for support services for DeafBlind students, their families, and the professionals with whom they work.

We are in the final stages of this year’s census, and are grateful to all of the families and professionals who have assisted us in updating student information and reporting new students to us. We have received a record number of new students this cycle, and we could not have done it without your participation.

If you received a buff colored census form and have not yet returned it to our office, we kindly ask that you do so as soon as possible!

If you know of any students age birth—26 who have a combined hearing and vision impairment whom you believe may not be registered with us, please visit our website to download a census form, and return it to our office as soon as possible.

Blank census forms are available at: http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/dbcentral/, and may be returned to our office by fax at: (989) 774-1572.

We appreciate all of your help with this important effort.

Make every student count!
What is the Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB)?

By Cynthia Caldwell, Michigan Commission for the Blind

The Michigan Commission for the Blind (MCB) is a vocational rehabilitation agency that provides services to adults who are legally blind in the state of Michigan. The DeafBlind Unit, within MCB, serves persons who have both a vision and hearing loss. In addition to services provided in the field, the agency has a residential training facility located in Kalamazoo, MI, called the Michigan Commission for the Blind Training Center, MCBTC. Participation in a program there requires a referral from an agency counselor. MCB has eight field offices located throughout the state: Detroit, Escanaba, Flint, Gaylord, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Lansing and Saginaw. The DBUnit is located in the Lansing office and serves the entire state.

Classes at the MCBTC focus on skills of blindness training. There is little vocational exploration, but the Center is working to expand this area. There are also summer programs available for high school juniors and seniors for college assessments and college preparation. While at the Center, there are some social, leisure activities available.

Not every client of MCB needs to go to the Center. Some clients either aren’t able to or interested in staying there. In these cases, the field counselor will work to provide direct teaching in the client’s home or at a site near the home. Several MCB staff persons are Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (CVRT) who may work directly with the client and there are also times when services are contracted for through other providers.

MCB provides services to anyone interested in pursuing a vocational goal. The agency does collaborate with ISD’s, CMH agencies and other community partners when feasible. The agency has served many persons who are identified as Developmentally Disabled (DD) and attempts to utilize supported employment as much as possible. MCB also provides independent living, IL, services to seniors, aged 55 and older, who are not interested in pursuing a vocational goal but want to remain living as independently as possible in their own home.

For more information or to locate your nearest Michigan Commission for the Blind regional office, visit the Department of Energy, Labor & Economic Growth’s website at www.michigan.gov/mcb.

Technical Questions about Braille Code?

Ask your questions on the National Braille Association Website: Ask An Expert Forum at www.nationalbraille.org. This free resource contains many categories, including formats, Nemeth, music, chemistry, tactile graphics, and more.
New CHARGE Syndrome Resources Available

Perkins Training & Educational Resources Program has two new webcasts available. In CHARGE Syndrome: The Impact on Communication and Learning, Martha Majors offers guidance for educators in developing an effective educational program to improve emotional well-being and success in learning for students with CHARGE syndrome. The webcast provides information on the physical, sensory, and neurological issues associated with CHARGE and how these issues can affect success in school. To view this webcast and more, visit http://www.perkins.org/resources/webcasts.

CHARGE Syndrome: An Overview, starring Pamela Ryan (Perkins School Psychologist), offers an overview of the characteristic features of CHARGE Syndrome and discusses the diverse ways these features may manifest themselves in children. She talks about some of the early medical complications that many children face and how these issues affect development and learning.

To view these and other webcasts, visit http://www.perkins.org/resources/webcasts/.

The CHARGE Syndrome Foundation has revised its recently created CHARGE Syndrome Professional Packet to include new materials and resources. This packet is an attempt to provide you with a brief introduction to CHARGE, its complexities, and some strategies to consider in educational and therapeutic settings. This valuable information is designed to assist educators and therapists who work with individuals who have CHARGE syndrome. The packet can be viewed and downloaded at http://chargesyndrome.org/resources-professionalpacket.asp.

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ICE (In Case of Emergency) Campaign

The brainchild of Paramedic Bob Brotchie of the East Anglian Ambulance Trust, the In Case of Emergency Campaign was started in the United Kingdom in 2005 to urge cell phone owners to enter emergency contact information into their cell phone contact lists under the entry name, “ICE” (or “ICE1,” “ICE2,” “ICE3,” etc.).

Brotchie developed the concept in response to the large number of accident victims he encountered, often unconscious or in shock, who did not carry next of kin or emergency contact information with them at the time of an accident. For unconscious victims without identification, it is often imperative for a medical worker to be able to contact next of kin in order to identify the victim. The campaign aims to make cell phones a handy and accessible tool for carrying emergency contact information by using the universally understood code, “ICE,” to denote who should be called if you (or your loved ones) are ever found injured or incapacitated. Campaign advocates also urge you to carry an alternative form of emergency contact information, such as a list in your wallet or purse, in case your phone is damaged or lost during an accident.

Introducing the Intel Reader

Intel Corporation recently announced the release of the Intel® Reader, a mobile handheld device designed to increase independence for people who have difficulty reading standard print. According to a press release by Intel:

“The Intel Reader can assist the estimated 55 million people in the U.S. who have dyslexia or other specific learning disabilities, or have vision problems such as low-vision or blindness, which makes reading printed words difficult or impossible. The Intel Reader, about the size of a paperback book, converts printed text to digital text, and then reads it aloud to the user. Its unique design combines a high-resolution camera with the power of an Intel® Atom™ processor, allowing users to point, shoot and listen to printed text.”

The Intel Reader comes at a cost, however. At nearly $1,500 per device, the readers are far from cheap.

For more information on the Intel Reader or where to purchase, visit reader.intel.com.

iPhone IEP Application Now Available!

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center has developed an Individualized Education Program (IEP) Checklist iPhone application for parents and teachers to use as they develop an IEP. The application is offered free of charge and can be downloaded at the Apple iTunes store by searching for “IEP Checklist.”
UPCOMING EVENTS

April 21 - 24, 2010
CEC (Council for Exceptional Children) Convention & Expo
Where: Nashville, TN
The largest professional gathering of the special education community. For information and registration, visit http://www.cec.sped.org/.

April 22, 2010
First Annual ARC Expo
Where: Howell, MI
A chance to learn about local resources that support community participation for families and people with disabilities. For more info, call 517-546-1228 or visit www.arclivingston.org.

April 24, 2010 (Cadillac, MI) and May 1, 2010 (Waterford, MI)
Planning for a Child's Education Training
For more information, contact (800) 552-4821.

April 26, 2010 (Traverse City, MI) and April 28, 2010 (Holland, MI)
Is Your Child Ready for Adult Life?
For information, contact (800) 359-3722.

April 29 - 30, 2010
AER Michigan Spring 2010 Chapter Conference
Where: Livonia, MI
For information or to register, visit http://maerbiv.org.

April 30 - May 1, 2010
Exploring Connections: Native American Sign Language Workshop
Where: Mott Community College, Flint, MI

May 1, 2010
Planning for a Child's Education Training
Where: Oakland Schools, Waterford, MI
For information, contact (800) 552-4821.

May 1, 2010
Where: Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, MI
For information and registration, visit www.Perkins.org.

May 3 - 4, 2010
Project Resilience: Train-the-Trainer
Where: New Center Community Mental Health Services, Detroit, MI
For individuals working with young people in faith based organizations, schools and youth groups in Wayne County, MI. For more information, call (313) 761-3780.

May 6 - 7, 2010
Webinar: Teaching the Internet and Microsoft Word with Zoomtext
Where: Washtenaw ISD, Ann Arbor, MI
For info, visit http://mde-lio.cenmi.org/.

May 7, 2010
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) Professional Development Series (Part 4) - Policy to the Classroom SB-CEUs available. Contact christine.cashman@nasdse.org.

May 11, 2010
This webinar is free of charge. For more information, visit http://www.eparentdigital.com.

May 14 - 16, 2010
Camp Tuhsmeheta Gardening Weekend
Where: Greenville, MI
Entire weekend of gardening, including five meals and lodging in Camp Tuhsmeheta's rustic cabins. For more information, visit http://www.campt.org/programs.php or call Gwen Botting at 989-855-2430.

May 17 - 19, 2010
The Tenth National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute
Where: Chapel Hill, NC
Premiere gathering for people who serve young children to learn, share and problem-solve. Info and registration is available online at http://www.nectac.org/.

June 14 - 18, 2010
Summer Institute I 2010: “Teaching Receptive and Expressive Communication Skills to Persons Who Have Severe/Multiple Disabilities Across the Age Span”
Where: Lexington, KY
Contact Diane Haynes at 502-777-6235 for information.

For more details and upcoming events, visit our website at: www.dbcentral.org