

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

 **April 2023**

# Just for Fun

Happy Spring! With St. Patrick’s day in the rearview and the end of the school year in sight, we look forward to the extra hour of sunlight, hearing the robins flying around in search of food and building their muddy nests, opening the windows to let fresh air in, leaving the parka and facemask behind while walking the dog, and of course, warmer temperatures. Many enjoy living in Minnesota because of the great changes that come with each season, and now we are set for a wet spring with all of the snow we wish away. Check out this article from Explore Minnesota, [26 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MINNESOTA, FROM A TO Z](https://www.exploreminnesota.com/list/26-things-you-should-know-about-minnesota-to-z)to hopefully remind you of why we put up with the cold winters in Minnesota and enjoy all of the great reasons we call this great state our home.

# Upcoming and Ongoing

Speaking of Spring, now is the time to begin thinking about summer plans and activities. Some students are excited for summer trips, time at the cabin, getting outdoors to enjoy the nice weather, or simply not having to get up and go to school. Here at SSB, our team works hard to provide opportunities to students over the summer to further their skills and abilities to prepare for employment. We provide services to help students get a job or work experience; we offer a variety of training in activities such as braille, technology, orientation and mobility, daily living skills, and soft skills needed for success in the workplace; we collaborate with the Summer Transition Program to bring employment readiness training to students who have completed tenth grade or above; and we enjoy bringing students together to mingle and meet others from around the state to network and create new relationships.

With all of that in mind, we are happy to share some of the opportunities that are available for summer 2023. Feel free to visit our [summer 2023 opportunities list on our website](https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/teens/summer.jsp) to see the upcoming opportunities available to students ages 14 to 21 that are connected with SSB. Please notify your counselor or Shane DeSantis at shane.desantis@state.mn.us if you are interested in any of these wonderful opportunities or have any questions!

## A Note from SSB Counselors

Hi, students! What a snowy winter this has been. As the summer approaches, we are excited to connect with all of you to check in and start thinking about goals and plans for the summer. We encourage all students to engage in some sort of training, education, exploration, or recreational activity over the summer that boosts knowledge and skills that are important for future success! For our graduating students, we want to connect with all of you to discuss next steps and plans for after secondary education. We like to set up technology assessments and check to see if students have any orientation and mobility needs to help you succeed in those next steps. If any recommendations come out of those assessments, we are happy to provide those services to ensure a smooth transition is made whether that’s off to college, into the workforce, or on to adjustment to blindness training to advance on your skills needed for success.

## SSB Communication Center

The Communication Center is here to put your books into accessible formats that work for you. Custom audio, e-text, DAISY markup, and Braille - we can do it! The Communication Center is Minnesota’s Accessible Reading Source – we’re here for you. Email us at ssb.audioservices@state.mn.us

## PACER

PACER Center “enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach his or her highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others.” For upcoming webinars and workshops, visit [Pacer's workshops website here](https://www.pacer.org/workshops/).

## ****Disability Hub MN****

“Disability Hub MN is a free statewide resource network that helps you solve problems, navigate the system and plan for your future. We can help you create your best life, your way.” This website has a variety of resources that can provide guidance on topics such as disability benefits through the [DB101 website](https://mn.db101.org/), information on housing resources through their [HB101 website](https://mn.hb101.org/), and a plethora of employment and transition resources for individuals with disabilities. Visit the [Disability Hub website here](https://disabilityhubmn.org/) to learn more. They have a great chat feature and a call-in number for anyone who has questions or is seeking specific resources.

[Youth in Transition Toolkit](https://disabilityhubmn.org/for-professionals/youth-in-transition/) – “This toolkit will introduce you to Minnesota's youth in transition framework. Explore tools and resources you can use with the youth you support to plan for their best lives.”

## APH

APH CareerConnect is “an employment information resource offered by the American Printing House for the Blind for job seekers who are blind or visually impaired. CareerConnect provides employment information, career exploration tools, and job seeking guidance for individuals with vision loss and the professionals who work with them.” Visit their website at [aphcareerconnect.com](https://aphcareerconnect.org/) to learn more. Below is a link to their archived and upcoming webinars.

Career Conversations Interview with an Author – April 6, 2023, 6:00 – 7:00 PM EST

Ann Chiappetta will share what it has been like for her to self-publish her poetry, fiction and nonfiction books. Ann has delt with changing vision as a result of retinitis pigmentosa and has used writing and her creative skills to help cope with her vision loss.

[Register Here for Career Conversations Interview with an Author](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faph.us20.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3Df36877787e431c3edc0020ff5%26id%3D73aeef5925%26e%3Ddbd0fcad22&data=05%7C01%7Cshane.desantis%40state.mn.us%7C554f385283e341226e8a08db2a30f5e3%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C638150162002794244%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=3CbYem0kIoG0LmUBeFLwvw2t8hziiDjkjaevfPVvkxA%3D&reserved=0)

Introducing Employment Connections
APH ConnectCenter is launching a new quarterly webinar, Employment Connections, focusing on employment-related topics. For our first edition, we’ll discuss when job seekers should disclose their disability. Read the blog ([Introducing "Employment Connections." First Topic: Disclosing a Disability](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faph.us20.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3Df36877787e431c3edc0020ff5%26id%3D6d74fe941f%26e%3Dd279d74f4b&data=05%7C01%7Cshane.desantis%40state.mn.us%7Cfe91baaf75774649850008db2c6c37a1%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C638152615516163712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=mhCpFhzFscT0Hd%2By69eT0obt8KCjprhdkbEYFCpmjeI%3D&reserved=0)) to hear details on the webinar and to learn about disclosing a disability from our first guest, Russell Shaffer, Executive Vice President of Strategy & Programs at [Disability:IN](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faph.us20.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3Df36877787e431c3edc0020ff5%26id%3D3c3de467bb%26e%3Dd279d74f4b&data=05%7C01%7Cshane.desantis%40state.mn.us%7Cfe91baaf75774649850008db2c6c37a1%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C638152615516163712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VgG%2B5XISUq49j4igQsl0KSQIB8Dskia%2FLgKqxh6JV2Q%3D&reserved=0). Then, join the APH ConnectCenter for the virtual event on April 13th at 6PM Eastern. [Register here.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faph.us20.list-manage.com%2Ftrack%2Fclick%3Fu%3Df36877787e431c3edc0020ff5%26id%3D0bb2cfbbe6%26e%3Dd279d74f4b&data=05%7C01%7Cshane.desantis%40state.mn.us%7Cfe91baaf75774649850008db2c6c37a1%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C638152615516163712%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=SjoBv2qqCv74e3kis%2B95wmd6pvdKkvjTfk1CBcS%2B9bY%3D&reserved=0)

Archived APH webinars can be found on their [YouTube page linked here!](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLUj6DcM1nN3HCfWxJIMLPeD8roKZt8xyu)

## Blind Abilities Podcasts

Check out Blind Abilities on the web at <http://www.BlindAbilities.com>. You can also download the app or use the Blind Abilities Alexa skill on your Alexa device just by saying, “Alexa, enable Blind Abilities.”

Here are just some of the people and topics featured on Blind Abilities recently:

* Check out [The Business Enterprise program (BEP): A Day in the Life of a BEP Owner/Operator/Vendor](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7828) to learn about BEP
* Get to know [Sam, Deanna, and Kate, the three SSB metro transition counselors!](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7808)
* Learn about [Job interview follow-up and disclosing](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7677) your disability
* [Click here to learn more about a new feature in Be My Eyes](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7832)

If you know of a student that would be interested in sharing their achievements on their journey, Blind Abilities would like to include their perspectives on future shows. Send a note to mailto:info@blindabilities.com

# Tech Tidbits

The Seeing Eye Advocacy app has just been released and is a convenient resource for finding information on guide dogs and service animals. Check out their app or [website here](https://www.seeingeye.org/) if you need information on laws regarding service animals and employment, residential, travel, and other categories. This app is free for IOS and Android.

Zuzanka is another IOS app out now. This camera-based app helps blind and low vision users locate expiration dates on products. The app also gives helpful tips and recommendations for finding where expiration dates may be found on many common products.

AI was a big topic at this year's CSUN technology conference. Both the Be My Eyes app and Envision glasses and app will soon be able to give more automated assistance, that is well beyond their current capabilities. Both apps hope to have these new features available later this year.

Bookshare Reader is here! This is a free reading app that can be accessed on web browsers, IOS and Android devices, and Alexa-enabled smart speakers. [Click here to learn more!](https://www.bookshare.org/cms/get-started/bookshare-reader)

# Building BRIDGEs

As students navigate the world of high school and begin thinking about the future, we offer services and resources that provide a foundation for success. Each of the core areas of our **BRIDGE** framework highlights an essential component that teenagers need in order to succeed after high school:

* **B**asic Skills
* **R**ole Models
* **I**nitiative
* **D**iscovery
* **G**oal Setting
* **E**xperiences

[4to24 App](https://www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/consumers/4-24-app) Available for Apple and Android Devices: The National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision out of Mississippi State University has created an app for students and parents. It aims to prepare youth for future employment and independence by providing targeted resources and suggesting age-appropriate activities to build skills and confidence.

[“The Key to Independence: 8 Life Skills for Teens”](https://www.positiveaction.net/blog/life-skills-for-teens) offers a summary of skills teens need in order to live independently. This website from Positive Action offers suggestions to teachers and parents to help students become equipped with some essential independent living skills.

[“I Am Going Blind, and I Now Find It Strangely Exhilarating”](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/28/opinion/embracing-blindness-disability.html) is a personal testimony of Edward Hirsch’s realization that retinitis pigmentosa had transpired to a point where he needed training. Once he realized his vision deteriorated to the point that he wasn’t able to see things in his apartment, had difficulty with stairs, and run-ins in the community, he engaged in training to continue living independently and enjoying life. At the end he tells his favorite joke to others: “I look forward to not seeing you again.”

Sam Seavey with The Blind Life. Sam has a website called theblindlife.net/ and a YouTube page youtube.com/@theblindlife where he engages in a variety of topics about blindness. “With more than 50,000 subscribers and over 700 informative videos, Sam helps people world-wide living with vision loss, offering tips for managing daily tasks, reviewing assistive devices, and hosting informative interviews with key stakeholders in the visually impaired community.” Sam has videos ranging from how to find dropped items on the floor and other daily living hacks to a range of his personal reviews of assistive technology products for blind and visually impaired individuals.

# Looking Ahead in High School

Thinking about what comes after high school is an important skill. The links below offer steps to take to prepare and plan for life after graduation.

[Freshman](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/freshman-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292477.pdf)

[Sophomore](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/sophmore-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292483.pdf)

[Junior](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/junior-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292478.pdf)

[Senior](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/senior-transition-timeline_tcm1045-292482.pdf)

# Ideas?

We are always looking for ideas you’d like to see featured in this newsletter. Please email shane.desantis@state.mn.us with any suggestions or brainstorms. ☺