

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

**March 2022**

# Just for Fun

Spring is right around the corner, bringing with it sunshine, warmer weather, and happy activities. To celebrate the welcome of a new season, [here](https://www.elle.com/culture/music/g27076318/best-spring-songs/) is a list of songs related to spring and spring activities.

* “Beautiful Day” by U2
* “Here Comes the Sun” by The Beatles
* “Come in with the Rain” by Taylor Swift
* “Up with the Birds” by Coldplay
* “Happy” by Pharrell Williams
* “April in Paris” by Ella Fitzgerald
* “Pocketful of Sunshine” by Natasha Bedingfield
* “Spring Break-Up” by Luke Bryan
* “Flowers in Your Hair” by The Lumineers
* “Weeds” by Marina and the Diamonds
* “Butterflies” by Kacey Musgraves

# Upcoming and Ongoing

## Summer Opportunities Fair

Eager to think about plans for summer? There are so many opportunities for youth to connect, learn, and have fun! Join SSB on Wednesday, April 13 at 6pm on zoom to hear about all of the options available. Email [sheila.koenig@state.mn.us](mailto:sheila.koenig@state.mn.us) for registration information.

## “Bring Your A Game”

We are excited to host a monthly series that connects Alexa games to job and work skills. On March 1, we’ll be playing “Escape the Room”. To sign up for this free program, email [Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us](mailto:Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us)

## Midwest Student Seminar

Back in Action!

The National Association of Blind Students (NABS) and the National Federation of the Blind of Illinois (NFBI) invite students to the annual Midwest regional seminar, a fun-filled weekend brimming with opportunities for professional growth, confidence building, and employment readiness skillset development with peers and mentors alike!

Friday, March 18 (6:00 PM) – Sunday, March 20 (12:00 PM)

Holiday Inn Chicago O’Hare Area

For more information, contact Michell Gip at [mgip@blindinc.org](mailto:mgip@blindinc.org) You can also register [here](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1UVfWRuxJJRxqvCpARlhANdhsDVjrUzaV3dP9xaPR_QM/viewform?edit_requested=true)

## College Success Program

SSB is partnering with the College Success Program to offer mentorship, meet ups, learning, and advocacy. Students finishing high school are paired with recent college graduates who are blind, low vision, or DeafBlind. Please email [sheila.koenig@state.mn.us](mailto:sheila.koenig@state.mn.us) with questions or to register.

## Year-Round Programs for Students

[BLIND, Incorporated](https://www.blindinc.org/) and [Duluth Center for Vital Living](https://www.lcfvl.org/ytp) offer opportunities for students to build skills and connect with peers throughout the school year. Check out these programs and let your student’s SSB counselor know if your student is interested in attending.

## 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](mailto: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 <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.” <https://disabilityhubmn.org/>

## APH ConnectCenter

Empowers people toward greater independence and lifelong success by providing curated information and resources to assist children, parents, job seekers, adults, and older people who are blind or visually impaired. Check out the [ConnectCalendar](https://aphconnectcenter.org/events/) to see upcoming opportunities.

## 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:

* Learn about [Sree Roy](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7166), former IT Specialist volunteering for organizations teaching technology to the BVI community
* Check out the [Vision Buddy](https://blindabilities.com/?p=7162) goggles for Low Vision and how this tool is helping others see and do more.
* Catch up with the [iPhone101/QuickBytes](https://blindabilities.com/?cat=472) and learn about Punctuation groups for STEM

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>

## Improving Services

This [survey](https://mcd.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1B0SbWhFFQdNoG2?fbclid=IwAR0gmUKHvk11Udl2hyqORqcpGaC39AFMN-g_yRidj1daSeVju5E6NYJW2QE) is part of the Minnesota Council on Disability’s initiative to collaborate across state agencies and the non-profit sector through the Minnesota Disability Action Partnership (MnDAP). We are distributing a survey to help the State of Minnesota and its partners better coordinate services, improve access to services, remove barriers, and protect the civil rights of Minnesotans with disabilities.

# Fast Forward: Potential and Possibilities

**Jennifer Wenzel**

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I am the Talent Acquisition Coordinator for a company called Beyond Vision which is headquartered in Milwaukee, WI. I work remotely from MN three weeks per month, and I travel to Milwaukee to work in person for one week. My job is to work with candidates as they fill open positions in our company. I work to hire blind or sighted candidates to fill various roles. My job includes everything from reviewing resumes, to phone screening potential candidates and making interview recommendations, interviewing with a team, contributing to the hiring decision, checking references and sending an offer letter. It is very exciting to be a part of helping someone gain employment with a great team. I also spend time networking to help make people aware of opportunities that Beyond Vision has to offer. In my free time I love to read, bake, tandem bike, walk, and attend movies and plays. I also enjoy spending time with my husband and three sons and attending blues, folk, or classic rock concerts.

I use many tools and techniques each day to make my job possible. I have been blind since

birth and was taught braille when I was four. I was fortunate to have many braille books and

materials growing up, and I now use braille every day in my job. I connect a braille display to my

computer to help quickly read and edit documents and to read interview questions. I also use

braille on my display to read books for professional development and to read notes when I do

PowerPoint presentations. I also use a PC with JAWS as my primary screen reader and NVDA as a

backup. I use voiceOver on my work iPhone. I am a cane user and use my travel skills when

working in person or when attending in-person events for work. I also use my creativity and

problem-solving skills to stay flexible and keep working even if technology does not always work

as planned. My boss appreciates that I always have a backup plan.

I love to give advice, so I will try to keep this short! I would advise students to learn good

computer skills. Smartphones are wonderful, but many jobs require work with programs such as

Excel which operate much more smoothly on a computer. I would also encourage students to

keep exploring new technology and keep up to date on software such as screen readers and

browsers. Diversity in technology skills can help you to be more employable. I would also urge

students to seek out and take opportunities to gain work experience. Students can learn

valuable lessons from any job, and everyone needs to start somewhere. Many people work

several “starter” jobs before working in their career field, and this is important for blind

students as well. My final piece of advice is to make mistakes and learn from them. I missed out

on some opportunities in high school because I was afraid I would fail. I have been more open

to opportunities since then, and sometimes I do make mistakes, but I find that I learn as much

from mistakes as from success. Learning does not stop when you graduate, it just continues in

new and exciting ways.

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# Tech Tidbits

Accessible Calculator Options

Desmos is available as both a web version, and as an IOS app.

Desmos Graphing Calculator Online

[https://www.desmos.com/](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.desmos.com%2F&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7Cb83881dbb71e49eb0c8b08d9d5e28b2b%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637775991229523784%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=fPnI1OLdCTKlD2QLrVoxcd3niJJhdAUK%2F14cEHxQtpI%3D&reserved=0)

Searching the IOS App Store for Desmos should also come up with the app version.

[https://apps.apple.com/us/app/desmos-graphing-calculator/id653517540](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fapps.apple.com%2Fus%2Fapp%2Fdesmos-graphing-calculator%2Fid653517540&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7Cb83881dbb71e49eb0c8b08d9d5e28b2b%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637775991229523784%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=DqNgI2CskdlV8KUZYSX4k6qKdOEOwE%2FZ4FauPENuE1M%3D&reserved=0)

The Windows Calculator, while defaulted to a standard calculator has several modes.  Clicking the hamburger menu in the upper left, or using Shift Tab and Tab via keyboard, accesses a menu that offers several other modes like, Scientific, Graphing, and several unit conversion modes.

If graphing isn't needed, search the IOS Ap Store for Talking Scientific Calculator.  This is an app version of a scientific calculator with speech.  [https://apps.apple.com/us/app/talking-scientific-calculator/id411433609](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fapps.apple.com%2Fus%2Fapp%2Ftalking-scientific-calculator%2Fid411433609&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7Cb83881dbb71e49eb0c8b08d9d5e28b2b%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637775991229523784%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=O29dmPG1BMx50QEdKtzj%2FGbXmh%2Bsf09WWVDEQEfOkGw%3D&reserved=0)

The Mac has a built-in calculator that does support basic, scientific, and unit conversion.  It doesn't seem to have graphing though.

[https://support.apple.com/guide/calculator/welcome/mac#:~:text=In%20the%20Calculator%20app%20on,logarithms%2C%20trigonometry%2C%20and%20more.](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fsupport.apple.com%2Fguide%2Fcalculator%2Fwelcome%2Fmac%23%3A~%3Atext%3DIn%2520the%2520Calculator%2520app%2520on%2Clogarithms%252C%2520trigonometry%252C%2520and%2520more.&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7Cb83881dbb71e49eb0c8b08d9d5e28b2b%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637775991229523784%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=q3nCOJ5qWM0%2B0ShWeFYov%2By0yyfBxIEzN%2B2wWnYTU18%3D&reserved=0)

There are other physical talking scientific calculators available, if someone doesn't need the TI84 Plus for graphing.  These may be good for younger students.  Independent Living sites and catalogs, and even places like Amazon have listings for talking scientific calculators.

# Building BRIDGEs

Picture of a well-built and stylish bridge.
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

[“Blind 8-Year-Old Girl Empowers Classmates with Braille Valentine's Day Messages”](https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/blind-year-girl-empowers-classmates-braille-valentines-day/story?id=36894611) is a heart-warming story about an elementary school student educating her classmates about Braille.

[“Humans of St. Thomas: Chief Accessibility Officer for Start Up”](https://news.stthomas.edu/humans-of-st-thomas-chief-accessibility-officer-for-start-up/) features a Minnesota student who is making changes in the world of accessibility.

[“How to Support Teens’ Mental Health During COVID and Beyond”](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_support_teens_mental_health_during_covid_and_beyond) from The Greater Good Science Center details the unique situation of adolescence during COVID. It also offers strategies to support teen coping, coping for adults, and links to additional resources.

["Legally Blind Teenager to Compete in Beijing Paralympics"](https://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/legally-blind-teenager-compete-beijing-paralympics-82851092) tells the story of Max Nelson, 17, who is set to compete for Team USA as the youngest person on their Paralympic Nordic ski team.

# 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 [sheila.koenig@state.mn.us](mailto:sheila.koenig@state.mn.us) with any suggestions or brainstorms. ☺