

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

 **September 2024**

# Just for Fun

Happy start to the school year! We hope everyone enjoyed the summer and is well-rested for the new school year. We look forward to connecting with you soon to hear about your summer!

For those in high school, feel free to check out this article, [*Back to School: High School Edition (opens as a PDF)*](https://education.mn.gov/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=023620&RevisionSelectionMethod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary)*,* by the Minnesota Department of Education. It has helpful tips on areas to consider as students prepare for their goals after high school.

The Summer Paralympics in Paris have concluded, and Team USA listed 11 athletes with a hometown in Minnesota, and several more have ties to Minnesota. Goalball, a team sport designed specifically for athletes with vision impairments, made its Paralympic debut in Toronto, Canada, in 1976 and continues today. While Team USA did not medal in Goalball, we did finish third in the medal count with 105 medals received. Two of those medals were won by Eagan native, Mallory Weggemann.

# Meet our new Multiple Systems and Pathways Navigator: Jada Johnson

Jada received her master’s degrees in Rehabilitation Counseling from an Historically Black Colleges and Universities and in Public Administration from Gallaudet University. She has a Vocational Rehabilitation Services background, providing Pre-ETS to deaf and hard of hearing students for five years. Jada has been involved in the DeafBlind community for over 15 years, working as a Pro-Tactile Interpreter for DB individuals. She likes roller skating for fun.

# Upcoming and Ongoing

## Career Networking Event

Join State Services for the Blind for a unique career networking opportunity on Saturday, October 5th! This event is specially designed for young adults, students, and their families. Adults who are blind, low vision, and DeafBlind will share their personal career journeys and insights on living with vision loss while achieving their professional and personal goals.

Date: Saturday, October 5, 2024

Time: 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM

Location: 800 West Broadway Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55411

Registration is required. Please sign up at [Career Networking Event Registration](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=RrAU68QkGUWPJricIVmCjCwT-ZINal9AgBmtde5iliJUM00wMVVSVFFUNEtMQ0NTVjY1MzAzNktWWC4u&route=shorturl).

If you are an adult with vision loss and would like to volunteer at this event, please contact Shane DeSantis at Shane.desantis@state.mn.us or 651-358-5205.

## SSB Peer Ambassadors

Two SSB students conduct peer-to-peer programming for students across the state to instruct students with vision loss on various topics of interest. They can meet with others one-on-one for peer discussion and are planning virtual and in-person group activities! Contact Amy at amyarias0508@gmail.com or Maddy at major.madeline7@gmail.com to learn about upcoming opportunities or to chat directly with them.

## A Note from SSB Counselors

Hello students! We hope you had a great summer and that the beginning of this school year is smooth! It’s the time of year when we double-check our records and ensure we have the most current information about you and your team. This helps us coordinate meetings with you, your family, your school, and your teachers. We are excited to connect with you soon to update this information and discuss your goals this year. High school students, please remember to invite SSB to your IEP meetings this year!

## 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.](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 guide 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](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. Upcoming events for early September can be found at this [hyperlink to their flyer](https://mailchi.mp/2b906730b9ad/aph-webinars-winding-down-august-13428848?e=dbd0fcad22). Archived APH webinars are available on the [APH ConnectCenter YouTube page.](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 from the Google Play store or use the Blind Abilities Alexa skill on your Alexa device by saying, “Alexa, enable Blind Abilities.”

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

* Tune in to hear about the [SSB student camping trip in August!](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8362)
* Hear from Amy and Maddy about their experience working with SSB in this [Welcome to SSB](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8334) podcast.
* Check out a Wellness Wednesday episode titled [Challenging “Normal”: Embracing Our Unique Differences](https://blindabilities.com/?p=8326)

If you know a student interested in sharing their achievements, Blind Abilities would love to feature their perspectives. Send a note to mailto:info@blindabilities.com

## College 101 Event

SSB is planning to host the annual virtual College 101 event in November. A panel of college students will discuss their experiences at various post-secondary institutions and the tools they use for success. If you are interested in attending or being a panelist, please contact Shane DeSantis at shane.desantis@state.mn.us.

## 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 shane.desantis@state.mn.us with questions or to register.

## Website Updates

Check out [SSB’s Youth Services website](https://mn.gov/deed/ssb/teens/) to learn about upcoming events, access archived newsletters, read transition flyers, watch student videos, and more!

## Tech Tidbits

AppleVis has been a valuable resource for iPhone, iPad, and Mac users since 2010. In July 2024, they announced that the website may close at the end of August. The good news is that AppleVis is partnering with Be My Eyes and will relaunch on or before September 9th during Apple's annual fall event. If you use an Apple product, AppleVis is an excellent website to find accessible apps, podcasts and tutorials, and an active user forum. Go to [www.applevis.com](http://www.applevis.com) to explore this resource.

Apple is hosting its fall event on September 9th, announcing new iPhones, Apple Watches, and more. Apple will also likely focus on its upcoming Apple AI of IOS and iPad OS 18, but many of these features may not be available until later this year or in 2025

Living Blindfully is a long-running podcast that covers all kinds of areas related to blindness and technology. Unfortunately, this podcast will be ending at the end of September, but there are a lot of useful existing content, interviews, and product demos here. Episode 298 is a great recent episode that primarily focuses on what it takes to be successful in education and employment. Just look up Living Blindfully in your podcast player of choice.

With school starting again, episode 248 of Freedom Schientific’s podcast, FSCast, covered different aspects of accessible math, including some tips and resources. You can listen at [FSCast 248, Back to School: Prizes, Math And More](https://blog.freedomscientific.com/fscast-248-back-to-school-prizes-math-and-more/) or by searching FSCast in your favorite podcast player or app.

# 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

## In the News and miscellaneous resources

[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.

When should vision loss be disclosed to an employer? Every situation is different, and here are three resources that can help you decide this question:

* American Printing House: [Disclosing Blindness/ Low Vision](https://aphconnectcenter.org/careerconnect/job-seekers/conducting-a-successful-job-search/disclosing-a-visual-impairment/)
* Job Accommodation Network: [Disability Disclosure](https://askjan.org/topics/Disability-Disclosure.cfm)
* National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision: [Who Needs to Know?: When and How to Disclose Vision Impairment](https://www.blind.msstate.edu/sites/www.blind.msstate.edu/files/2022-03/Who%20Needs%20to%20Know%20-%20Disclosing%20Your%20Vision%20Impairment.pdf)

[“The Key to Independence: 8 Life Skills for Teens”](https://www.positiveaction.net/blog/life-skills-for-teens) summarizes the skills teens need to live independently. This website from Positive Action offers suggestions to teachers and parents to help students acquire these essential skills.

[AI Powered Tools for People Who are Blind](https://lhblind.org/ai-powered-tools-for-people-who-are-blind/)

Sam Seavey with The Blind Life. Sam has a website called theblindlife.net/ and a YouTube page, youtube.com/@theblindlife, where he engages in various topics about blindness. “With over 50,000 subscribers and over 700 informative videos, Sam helps people worldwide 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.”

## 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. ☺