

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

**March 2021**

## Just for Fun

[Positively Present](https://www.positivelypresent.com/) points out “Living a "positively present" life means in the moment while focusing on the positive in every situation— and that's exactly what [Positively Present](http://positivelypresent.com/) strives to help you do. Though many of us try to, it's impossible to live happily in the past or in the future. And if the now is all we have, why not make this moment a positive experience?”

Use the following “Bad Mood Busters” to help find the boost you need.

* I am happy to have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in my life because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .
* It always makes me smile when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .
* Today I am grateful that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* We really have fun when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .
* It always makes me laugh when \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

## Upcoming and Ongoing

### Chill & Chat

We are excited to offer informal Zoom meet ups for students to connect with peers, problem solve, and support each other. Meet ups happen the first Tuesday of every month at 4pm. Email Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us for details and for the Zoom link.

### March 20 DeafBlind Women’s History Panel

On March 20, at 2:00 pm Central Time, the DeafBlind Support and Access Network is hosting a virtual panel discussion on DeafBlind women’s history. Panelists will discuss: “role models, challenges that DeafBlind women face now, and how it might change in the next 20 years, disability rights, stereotypes, and how DeafBlind women make the world a better place.”

This workshop will be conducted in ASL. Captioning and voice interpreting will be provided. Streamtext will be available. A separate room will have access to CDIs. Registration is $25. For more information & registration. Visit [www.dbsan.org/](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMTAzMDIuMzYyMTM5NTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5kYnNhbi5vcmcvIn0.y8OoRCq0soztE_tbYi1ojwajWN7pdovDh52F4S9Dq50/s/561394995/br/98745019590-l).

### College Shadow

SSB’s College Shadow is similar to a job shadow. High school students can virtually tour a college, talk with college students, and sometimes attend a college class. Email Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us if you’d like to participate.

### 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

### Year-Round Programs for Students

[BLIND, Incorporated](https://www.blindinc.org/), [Duluth Center for Vital Living](https://www.lcfvl.org/), and [Vision Loss Resources](https://visionlossresources.org/) offer opportunities for students to build skills and connect with peers throughout the school year. Contact Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us with any questions.

### Helen Keller National Center-Summer Youth Programs

In a time when distance learning ensures your safety, HKNC has adapted our New York programs to online so that you still have the opportunity to learn from other deaf-blind individuals and our experienced professionals. To learn more go to <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/youth-programs>

### PACER

“These are challenging times for everyone. As we all navigate this public health crisis, PACER is committed to being a valuable resource for families of children with disabilities and students who are bullied, as well as the professionals who serve them. Go to [https://pacer.org/special/covid-19.asp](https://www.pacer.org/special/covid-19.asp) for COVID-19 resources and to <https://www.pacer.org/workshops/> for a list of upcoming workshops.

**Call or email us!** PACER’s parent advocates, assistive technology specialists, bullying prevention associates, and all staff are available to assist families and professionals. **Call 952-838-9000 or email** pacer@pacer.org **for assistance.”**

### ****Minnesota Disability Law Center****

The **Minnesota Disability Law Center** (MDLC) provides free civil legal assistance to individuals with disabilities statewide, regardless of age or income, on legal issues related to their disabilities.

Young adults with disabilities have the right to live, work, and interact in the community. These rights come from a mix of federal and state laws and policies, including the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Minnesota's Olmstead Plan. MDLC helps youth with disabilities transitioning into adulthood understand their rights and find the resources they need to thrive.

**To learn more, go to** <https://mylegalaid.org/our-work/programs/transition-youth-program>

### Minnesota Association of Blind Students Activities

Students are invited to participate in the following activities:

* Meetings take place on the first Sunday of every month at 7pm. “Come find out what this group is all about, and bring your thoughts and suggestions.”
* Join MNABS for Monday Madness every Monday at 7pm to play games and socialize.
* For additional upcoming opportunities such as the Midwest Student Seminar, follow the Facebook page [Minnesota Association of Blind Students](https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Organization/Minnesota-Association-of-Blind-Students-1534210496870926/).

Contact President Samantha Flax at students@nfbmn.org  with any questions and to get Zoom links for any of these activities.

### Blind Abilities Podcasts

Check out Blind Abilities on the web at [www.BlindAbilities.com](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:

* Beth Gustin, a nationally certified mental health counselor, speaking about the impact that the prolonged pandemic is having on our mental health. <https://blindabilities.com/?p=6574>
* Feather Chelle who just published her first book, [Stranded](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08RW7ND4W/ref%3Dcm_sw_r_sms_awdb_t1_b527FbE0S01ZV), in December and whose second book, a picture book, will be published soon. Feather Chelle, <https://blindabilities.com/?p=6571>
* A creative Program Helping Students Connect Socially Through Arts, Sports, Community Service, and Mentoring <https://blindabilities.com/?p=6568>
* Inclusion in STEM and the Importance of Braille at Any Age, Meet Dr. Natalina Martiniello <https://blindabilities.com/?p=6552>

 If you know of a student that would be interested in sharing their achievements along their journey, we would like to include their perspectives on future shows.

## Fast Forward: Potential and Possibilities

**Hannah Harriman**


My name is Hannah Harriman.  I am deaf blind; I am totally blind with unilateral hearing loss in my left ear.  In 2019, I graduated from Bethel University with a Bachelor’s of Arts Degree in Relational Communications.

I am a Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Guide with Minnesota Hands and Voices.  My role in this position is to support children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing and their families.  DHH Guides meet with children and families and answer whatever questions they have about their hearing loss by sharing our experiences and showing unbiased support.  For instance, we can’t show preference to a certain communication method (spoken English or American Sign Language).  Additionally, we host events, which are currently virtual, for children and families to network with one-another.  Additionally, I am in the midst of training for another job where I will be transcribing medical charts.

I had several jobs while in college.  When I attended Century College, I was a Writing Tutor, giving students feedback on their papers.  Once I transferred to Bethel University, I had two other extraordinary jobs.  I was an Academic Support Tutor for students in the BUILD (Bethel University Inclusion Learning Development) Program.  There, I provided academic and social support to students who had cognitive delays.  Additionally, I had the unique opportunity to assist one of my Communications professors with his Sabbatical Project.  His project focused on website accessibility.  The project had two parts.  The first aspect involved analyzing Bethel’s website for accessibility barriers as well as things that were going well.  The second part involved writing why accessibility matters, both from a legal and moral perspective.

My hobbies include singing, reading, and spending time outdoors.  I serve at my church in various capacities; I sing on the church worship team and am a leader for the youth group.

Many of the strategies and techniques I use revolve around the use of technology.  I use a screen-reader on my phone and on my computer.  I also use a Braille Display when I need to take notes or give a presentation and don’t want to hear my computer talking or when portability is of utmost importance.  Braille is also a key to independence.  I use Braille to label household appliances and use Braille to locate rooms in public buildings.

Pertaining to my hearing loss, I use different techniques in different situations.  For example, I used an FM System in middle school and high school, which amplifies sound.  This was beneficial in the classroom setting, as it decreased background noise.  However, the FM System proved to be detrimental in social settings and in Orientation and Mobility (O&M).  In social settings, I could only hear the person who had the FM System.  If anyone else tried talking to me, their voice was either muffled or not distinguishable at all.  As a result, I sometimes got the reputation of being standoffish.  In Orientation and Mobility, the FM was ineffective, as I could not localize sound; I could hear sound in all four directions.  Strategies that work for me include eliminating background noise when possible, positioning myself so that people are either in front of me or on my right side, wearing my hearing aid, and advocating for what I need when necessary.

If I were to give advice to students, there are a few things I’d suggest. First and foremost, you are your own best advocate.  Self-advocacy doesn’t end upon high school graduation; this is when it truly begins.  Additionally, self-reliance is important; however, don’t forget that we are all interdependent.  I would not be who I am today without the encouragement and guidance I received from family, friends, and mentors.  When graduating high school, many individuals feel invincible; I certainly did.  There is nothing wrong with taking an untraditional path.  I participated in the Academy Plus Program at Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) after high school for a year and a half.  Although I initially felt that I could not stray from the traditional path post-graduation, in hindsight, this was a great decision.  I learned independent-living and vocational skills while still pursuing academics.  Finally, as individuals who are blind and visually impaired, we must fight for equal access, inclusion, and high expectations in the workforce.  This challenge may feel exhausting at times, but in the end, the hard work pays off and is extremely rewarding.

## Tech Tidbits

Two new Humanware Braille displays are now available.  The Brailliant BI 40 and 20 include some basic note taking, reading, and other features.

NVDA has just released an update with many bug fixes, and some new features like context sensitive help commands.

IOS 14.5 should be releasing soon, which will allow Apple Watch users to unlock their phones automatically if they are wearing a mask.  This update should also allow the user to change their default music player app to something other than Apple Music, like Spotify or YouTube Music.

## 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

[“Teaching Keyboarding: More Than Just Typing”](https://www.educationworld.com/a_tech/tech/tech072.shtml) from Education World emphasizes the importance for keyboard instruction. It’s a skill that all students need in order to be efficient in college and the workplace. Often keyboarding is offered as a business elective in high schools, which is the ideal place for students to learn and practice this skill. Many technical colleges in Minnesota have keyboarding classes, and there are additional online resources, too.

As a recent 60 Minutes episode shows, there are alternative ways to accomplish dreams when a person loses sight[. “Architect Goes Blind, Says He’s Actually Better at His Job”](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/architect-chris-downey-goes-blind-says-hes-actually-gotten-better-at-his-job-60-minutes/) is a good example of how thinking outside of the box can lead to unexpected results.

Sam Seavey has a YouTube channel called ["The Blind Life"](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc_bEnao0vM). He offers information and resources for students-especially in the area of assistive technology. He also shares his journey of coming to terms with his vision loss due to Stargardts.

[“Pathways to Literacy”](https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/secondary-topics) offers information ranging from a basic overview of literacy to various stages of development and special challenges, as well as an exploration of different media (print, braille, auditory strategies).

The first DeafBlind person to graduate from Harvard Law School, [Haben Girma](https://habengirma.com/) is a human rights lawyer advancing disability justice. President Obama named her a White House Champion of Change. She received the Helen Keller Achievement Award, a spot on the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, and TIME100 Talks. President Bill Clinton, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Chancellor Angela Merkel have all honored Haben. Haben believes disability is an opportunity for innovation, and she teaches organizations the importance of choosing inclusion.

## 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 with any suggestions or brainstorms. ☺