

# The Spectacle

**-Dare to stand out**

**November 2021**

# Just for Fun

Taking care of yourself mentally as well as physically is fundamental to being well and happy. The following are tips from the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping/cope-with-stress/index.html) that remind all of us to cultivate resilience and strength.**:**

* **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media**. It’s good to be informed, but hearing about the pandemic constantly can be upsetting. Consider limiting news to just a couple times a day and disconnecting from phone, tv, and computer screens for a while.
* **Take care of your body**
  + Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate
  + Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals
  + Exercise regularly
  + Get plenty of sleep
* **Make time to unwind** — Try to do some other activities you enjoy
* **Connect with others** — Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling
* **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations** — While social distancing measures are in place, try connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail

# Upcoming and Ongoing

## Phenomenal Open Mic Night

Thanks to everyone who participated in SSB’s first student Open Mic Night! We were wowed by piano players, guitar players, singers, visual artists, and music mixers. So proud of all the talent out there!

## “Bring You’re A Game”

We are excited to host a monthly series that connects Alexa games to job and work skills. For example, on November 2 we connected “The Price is Right” to budgeting and money management. To sign up for this free program, email [Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us](mailto:Sheila.koenig@state.mn.us)

## 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:

* Qudsiya Naqui – Lawyer, Advocate and Podcaster. A [conversation](https://blindabilities.com/) about Transitioning From Sighted to Blind and From College to the Workplace
* iPhone101: Voice Memos – [Not Your Basic Recorder Anymore](https://blindabilities.com/?p=6973).

iPhone101: [Music Recognition and Shazam](https://blindabilities.com/?p=6971)

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>

# Fast Forward: Potential and Possibilities

**Patrick Vellia**

**Patrick sitting on stairs smiling.
**I have held several jobs since moving to Minnesota. I moved here two years ago to work at Target Field for Delaware North in the culinary kitchen. At that time, I was just part of the dishwashing team and that’s a lot of walking about! My phone tracked three miles per shift inside the kitchen alone. The chef in that particular kitchen can finger spell, which is good for those with low vision and even DeafBlind with some functional vision.  This year we added on some cold side prep work with spiralizers, portioning, plating, and washing of vegetables.

Once baseball was over two years ago, I moved on to Target Center’s culinary kitchen. There there was many a project to do—dicing up six prime ribs by hand, cutting onions Julianne-style, dicing up lemons and tomatoes with the dicers, slicing Big Boy tomatoes with the tomato slicer, slicing meats with the meat slicer, preparing sliders and all manner of other things.

During the darkest hour of the pandemic when we were all stuck at home, I was working as an intern for a writing platform’s Developer Team improving their web application, evaluating it for conformance to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) doing unit testing, improving architectural design of the database, and guiding team members in accessibility remediation.

Now I also work for the State’s Commission for the Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing (MNCDHH) as part of their civic engagement team where I serve as a consultant to improve inclusivity and equity in the DeafBlind community, and as an advisory member for the MET Council and the Secretary of State’s Office, educating on voting rights, and how to lobby.

To do my job, I use tools like Zoom from home and Slack for collaboration. For access I use macOS’s Zoom magnification with inverted colors, iPad in person where someone can type and I can read it then respond verbally, iPhone with a Braille display to keep up with things while away from my desk. For the Civic Engagement work with MNCDHH I also utilize at home tactile interpreters for Zoom meetings.

To high school students I would say there aren’t any true barriers but the mental blocks you set for yourself. Even a person with combined sensory loss can do a lot in a kitchen where people think you can’t. You can also work in IT within certain roles and still flourish, or in web design as well. So there’s no real barriers as long as you can figure out the supports you need.

# Tech Tidbits

Windows 11 was released as of early October. Some new PC's are shipping with Windows 11, and some PC's are eligible for the upgrade. If it is available for your system, it will be in Windows Update. Don't worry though if it's not there. Microsoft is releasing it gradually over the next several months, as it is being tested with specific hardware. Windows 10 will be supported for several more years, and there is no huge reason to rush to get the upgrade.

Jaws, Zoomtext, and Fusion 2022 are currently in beta, and will be released likely in the next couple of weeks, so look out for information on these upgrades from Vispero if you are eligible.

IOS 15.1 was just released, and does contain some accessibility fixes. Visit [www.applevis.com](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.applevis.com%2F&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7C300484aa8e934ffe3c9f08d99886a406%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637708526300577522%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=%2F7WBVGre2FU4WpQDC0o%2B1skTpbBlVPqYnjgSpPYhDfM%3D&reserved=0) for more details on these and all Apple updates as they happen.

Android 12 is also being rolled out, and will be coming to Pixel devices first. Like Windows 11, it may take a while for you to see this update on your Android phone or tablet.

# 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

[“Painting Blind with Visually-Impaired Visual Artist John Bramblitt”](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fmedium.com%2Fdemptyspace%2Fpainting-blind-with-visually-impaired-visual-artist-john-bramblitt-43bf07ec2e3d&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7Ca8357ce4e5b04ae2541708d98da167be%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637696547715992592%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=%2BKbmD5DrqW8fGDAJiZePt0Oi27j%2F0AT5ivM6IFod8TU%3D&reserved=0) is an article from 2019 and is still a good example of how often people who are blind, low vision, or DeafBlind find creative ways to nourish their interests and skills. “John Bramblit is a visually impaired visual artist based in Denton, Texas. To put it bluntly, he’s blind, but he’s also a painter. Bramblitt paints by raising lines on the surface of a canvas and altering the consistency of paint so he can ‘feel’ the colors. He’s worked with internationally acclaimed museums like the Guggenheim and the Metropolitan Museum of Art to run popular workshops that teach people to see the world as he does and paint using their senses and imagination.”

[4to24 App](https://www.ntac.blind.msstate.edu/consumers/4-24-app) Now 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 Best $34.32 I Ever spent: My White Cane”](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vox.com%2Fthe-goods%2F22673510%2Fbest-money-white-cane-blindness&data=04%7C01%7Csheila.koenig%40state.mn.us%7C81f4c975aed8432a65d908d97d0a0efa%7Ceb14b04624c445198f26b89c2159828c%7C0%7C0%7C637678304425293203%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=iDnBnwm6u5I5V991AAswSv5J53Y9TT27ASWguuBCvI4%3D&reserved=0) Qudsiya Naqui tells us about the struggles and triumphs she’s felt while accepting her vision loss—specifically, she reflects about the various attitudes she’s held toward using a cane. Her message is one of empowerment and capability.

[“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.

# 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. ☺