

Horizons

A Family Newsletter of Project Reach Deaf-Blind Services

Faith Rosenshein Young, Editor
Fall, 2021



Blessings Abound

All of us at Project Reach are counting our blessings this Thanksgiving and working with you and your families is definitely one of them. We learn so much from our parents and Project Reach children every day. This past year you taught us about strength, resiliency, creativity, humor, and humility. We send our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you, along with our best wishes for a joyous holiday season!

Carla, Faith, Jean, Michelle, Patty, and Peggy



Here Comes the Snow (and Winter Holidays!)



Did you know that many organizations help families of children who are deafblind celebrate the holidays? Here's a list of a few winter holiday opportunities that may interest you.

Holiday letters

- Braille Works' free Santa Reads Braille program sends one of four different letters from Santa in large print and contracted braille. Letters are written to appeal to young children but Braille Works does not have an age limit. Email info@brailleworks.com for questions or specific needs (such as ensuring different letters for the multiple children in your family). Visit <https://brailleworks.com/santa-reads-braille/> for more information and to request a letter. **Deadline: Monday, December 6.**
- The National Federation of the Blind Santa and Winter Celebration Letters program sends free Braille letters and activities to children 10 years old and younger. Letters from Santa or in celebration of winter are available in contracted braille in both English and Spanish. Visit <https://nfb.org/programs-services/early-childhood-initiatives/santa-letters?q=programs-services%2Fearly-childhood-initiatives%2Fsanta-letters> for details and to request a letter. **Deadline: Friday, December 17.**
- DbI Multilingual Season Greetings aims to connect people across cultures and languages. Send a holiday greeting in any form, any language (e.g., written in Braille or print, with symbolic objects, with a picture or tow or a very short video of max. 40 seconds) to DbI at comcom@tanne.ch and they will share it on their website and/or social media accounts until January 3, 2022. DbI requests you remember to make you message as accessible as possible for anyone with sensory impairments.

Signing Santa

- Drive-Thru Breakfast with Signing Santa in St. Louis, MO on Saturday, December 4. **Registration deadline is Friday, November 19.** If you register after this date, you can still see have a brief visit with Signing Santa, but your child will most likely not receive a gift. For more information and to register visit <https://form.jotform.com/deafinc/BSS2021>.
- Meet & Greet Mr. & Mrs. Deaf Santa Drive Thru for children ages 0-12 years old and their families on Sunday, December 12 at Archer Park in Chicago. Admission is free. For more information and to register contact Sarah B. Faber at sarah.faber@chicagoparkdistrict.com or Tim Owens at timothy.owens@chicagoparkdistrict.com.

Holiday Events

- Deaf & HOH Teen Holiday Bonfire at Sauganash Park in Chicago, Friday, December 10, for teens in 8th grade through high school. You can register at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1u1ioLzMi2tbmvQt5lIXBJflwtjobSv137o4XpMNOqs0/viewform?edit_requested=true or for more information contact Sarah B. Faber at sarah.faber@chicagoparkdistrict.com or Tim Owens at timothy.owens@chicagoparkdistrict.com.
- DHH Winter Arts and Crafts Night for families with children of all ages who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing at John A Logan Community College in Carterville, IL. This event is hosted by Illinois Service Resource Center and JALC ASL Club. **Registration deadline is December 2**, but all interpreter requests require 48 hours notification. For information and registration visit https://reg.learningstream.com/reg/event_page.aspx?ek=0057-0013-03e47083fa814438acf6b3f45ef1d97b.

News You Can Use

New Illinois Law for School Mental Health Days starts January 2022. This new law (SB1577) allows any public-school student, ages 6-17, in Illinois to take up to five (5) days off from school for mental or behavioral health reasons without the need for a note from a doctor. In addition, children taking a mental health day(s) will be allowed to make up any work missed during their absence. The bill states that once a child requests a second mental health day absence, a school counselor will reach out to the family to discuss possible student support.

The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) Family Engagement Initiative kicks off a private listserv group for families “where you can connect with each other to share strategies, strengthen knowledge, gain insight, and build connections to expand interactions.” Visit <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/fall-kickoff> for more information and to register.

The Texas Deafblind Project has a New Deafblind Interaction website “designed to engage readers in the spirit of thoughtful inquiry, rather than bulleted lists of procedures,” according to Chris Montgomery, Education Consultant for the Texas Deafblind Project. Montgomery explains, the site is not a “how-to” guide for instruction but instead explores issues such as experiencing the world through the sense of touch and sharing meaningful experiences. Read a blog article at Paths to Literacy (<https://www.pathstoliteracy.org/blog/entering-world-tactile-interaction-child-who-deafblind-introducing-new-deafblind-interaction>) for more information about the new site and a link to an introductory webinar or go to <https://txdeafblindproject.org/deafblind-interaction/> to visit the site directly.

National Center on Deafblindness website section For Families (<https://www.nationaldb.org/for-families/>) helps you expand your knowledge about deafblindness, connect with other families who are deafblind, or learn

a new skill to help your child. This website section contains a wealth of constantly updated information under the categories of *Services and Organizations for Families*, *Learning Resources*, *Key Topics for Families*, and *Family Events*.

The Chicago Lighthouse hosts a monthly virtual parent support group. The next scheduled meeting is December 1 from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. For more information or to register visit <https://chicagolighthouse.org/event/virtual-parent-support-group-2/>.

The Youth Transition Program at The Chicago Lighthouse offers teens and young adults a variety of programs designed for youth who intend to live independently, seek competitive employment, and/or attend vocational training or college after high school graduation. Their next event is a **scholarship seminar** on December 4. For more information about the transition program and a list of upcoming events visit <https://chicagolighthouse.org/program/yt/>.

Illinois Service Resource Center - <https://www.isrc.us/isrc-newsletters> - publishes four newsletters, ISRC Review, ISRC Digital Update, Parent Connections Newsletter, and Parent Connections en español.

Illinois Parent Training & Information Centers

- **Family Matters** - <https://www.fmptic.org/> - provides information, referral, connections, and trainings to parents of children with disabilities in Illinois. In addition, Family Matters publishes a quarterly newsletter - <https://www.fmptic.org/newsletters> - with information about IEPs, resources, conferences, events, and webinars in Illinois. The Fall 2021 issue details U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Service, “updated guidance interpreting the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in light of the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.” Matters also offers a monthly **Transition NewsBlast** that provides information and resources of importance to youth with disabilities as they transition out of school services. To join the news blast email info@fmptic.org.
- **Family Resource Center on Disabilities** - <https://frcd.org/> - provides parents in the Chicago Metropolitan area with information, training, assistance, and support. For example, FRCD helps families learn about the IEP process and their rights under IDEA; communicate more effectively with school personnel and obtain appropriate services for their child; learn about Early Intervention and Transition services; and meet and share with other parents of children with disabilities.

The Arc of Illinois Family to Family Health Information Center (<https://www.thearcofil.org/about-us/programs/family-to-family-health-information-center/>) holds a monthly webinar series with many topics applicable to families of children who are deafblind. While the webinars are free, you do need to register in advance. Captioning is available in both English and Spanish. Contact Mary Dixon at 815-464-1832 x1017 or mary@thearcofil.org with questions. Visit <https://www.thearcofil.org/events/category/arc-events/> for a list of upcoming webinars.

In the market to buy, sell, donate, or receive medical equipment and supplies? Visit the following websites to see available options.

- Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP) Device Recycling - <https://iltech.org/how-we-help/device-recycling/>
- Little Wins - <https://littlewins.com/>
- Riddick’s Ride - https://www.riddicksride.org/lending_garage/equipment/index.html
- The Kids Equipment Network (TKEN) - <https://tken.org/access-equipment/>
- Devices 4 the Disabled (D4D) - <https://devices4thedisabled.org/equipment/>

Upcoming Events

- **January 2022 – Illinois Families Together Parent Zoom** – Topic: Sibling Relationships – the Good, the Bad & the Normal
- **April 23, 2022 – Illinois Family Leaders Virtual Conference** featuring Dr. Matt Buckman & Karla Belzer



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_____ Please make no changes to my address and keep me on your mailing list

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Project Reach

Philip J. Rock Center and School

818 DuPage Blvd.

Glen Ellyn, IL 60137