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Introduction

It is hard to believe that the year is nearly over! This final issue of the Monthly Message covers a range of matters: student and staff activities and achievements, information about APSEA programs and news about next year.

Visit with IWK Autism Team

- by Marilyn Neal, Preschool Consultant
and Sheila Jamieson, Classroom Teacher

Theresa Milligan, Coordinator of the IWK Autism Team, invited APSEA team members to a meeting/information sharing session at the IWK on 15 April 2008, which we attended. Members of the autism team; Psychologists, Occupational Therapists, Physicians and Social Workers, as well as Susan Brison from the Early Intensive

Behaviour Intervention program attended the session.

The meeting started with the APSEA staff giving an overview of the services provided by the APSEA Organization for preschool children who are blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind. The autism team provided an overview of their services and Susan Brison gave an overview of the Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention program that is being offered for very young children with autism, throughout the province. Students who receive service from APSEA will be able to access this program.

We then discussed how the autism team and APSEA could work more collaboratively when providing services for children who are visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind and autistic. We questioned how we could improve our ability to serve children on our shared caseloads. One suggestion was to have a section on the *Request for Short Term Program* form for parents to fill out and sign, giving the IWK Health Teams and APSEA permission to share information and documentation. This would ensure all teams are aware of all the services and supports a student is receiving. This would also provide IWK teams with dates of short-term programs, allowing for joint observations and consultations while the student is at the APSEA Centre.

The group agreed on the importance of collaborating when working with these complex children. Often these children, who are visual learners, will require input from the APSEA team for adaptations of various programs, such as Picture Exchange communication System (PECS). It is also important to be aware of the impact of hearing loss on language development when implementing a communication program. The autism team also expressed concerns regarding assessment, such as selecting the appropriate tools for assessing children with autism and a sensory loss. The discussion around increased collaboration was very positive and the next step is to create an avenue for exchanging information (consent to release or exchange information forms) that is acceptable for both the IWK and APSEA.

Veith Street Gallery

- by Christy Everett
Assistant Program Supervisor

Creative Spirit East is a collective of artists who are living with disability. Through art they build on their talent and skill to express their unique perspectives, learn about the business of art and showcase their work to the public at galleries operated by the Veith Street Gallery Studio Association.

APSEA is proud to display exhibits from Veith Street Gallery. When you are at the Centre, please take time to enjoy the art work.

Thank you to Steve Trussoni for creating this connection between APSEA and the Gallery.

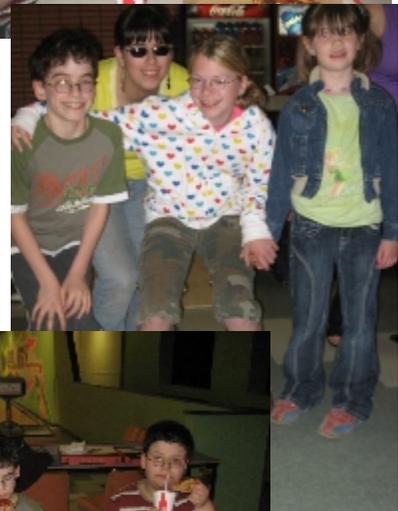
Bowling and Pizza

- by Nancy Bradley,
Lynn Seymour-Lalonde and Jen Lesperance
BVI Itinerant Teachers

Moncton-area students who are blind or visually impaired enjoyed a bowling and pizza party on May 27.



Eight student bowlers, from grade 2 through to high school, participated in this fun-filled evening.



Visiting Professor

- by John McConnell
 Director of Programs (BVI)

Dr. Johane Robitaille and Karen McMain of the IWK Eye Clinic invited APSEA staff to attend lectures for eye and health professionals, given by Dr. Tony Moore, a Pediatric Ophthalmologist & Professor of Ophthalmology from the Institute of Ophthalmology University College London, and Dept. of Inherited Eye Disease at Moorfields Eye Hospital. These sessions were held April 23 & 24, 2008.

A group of APSEA staff from the Centre, as well as off-campus staff from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were able to attend at least some of these lectures. The topics addressed by Dr. Moore were very pertinent to APSEA staff serving children with these diagnoses and visual conditions. He had a wealth of theoretical and practical information about these eye conditions and their effects on children and families served by APSEA.

PE Teacher: Glenn MacKinnon (Salmon River Elementary & Valley Elementary)

(Article and pictures were published in the Spring 2008 issue of Balance: An Active Living Newsletter for PE, PDR & Health Teachers, produced by the Chignecto-Central Regional School Board and submitted by Julie Windebank, Rachel's BVI Itinerant Teacher)

Physical Education for everyone! What an ideal dream for all schools, all Physical Educators and of course, all children. Salmon River Elementary School in Truro demonstrates an incredibly diverse and inclusive Physical Education program lead by Glenn MacKinnon.

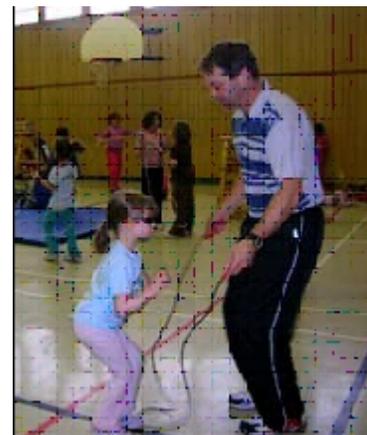
Glenn, who also teaches at Valley Elementary, is a well known and well respected PE teacher who has been teaching in Truro for over 20 years. Providing a positive learning environment for all students is obviously of great importance to Glenn as he welcomes a grade 2 class for a snowshoeing experience. One of the



students participating is Rachel, an enthusiastic 7 year old who is blind, who rushes to prepare for the outdoor adventure!

Walking hand in hand with classmates through the snowy trails allows Rachel to experience physical activities with her friends while promoting the natural inclusion of all. Glenn organizes and leads break time and lunchtime activity sessions such as skipping, gymnastics and dances in the gym. Again, everyone is welcome as he modifies activities to suit all participants. Having fun while developing a positive attitude toward being active seems to be the goal!

Julie Windebank, Rachel's APSEA itinerant teacher, praises Glenn for his stands for participants, behaviour and skill development.



She notes that he adapts activities to make PE safe, fun and inclusive as he promotes healthy active living. In early childhood development, vision plays a critical role in learning concepts and movement, so children who are blind or visually impaired are at risk of being delayed in motor development; they may develop abnormal posture, gait, and have poor flexibility and level of physical fitness. Glenn works closely with Rachel's EA and has created a challenging and exciting learning environment for Rachel, as she has the opportunity to work and play with classmates developing strong physical and social skills, as well as learning to enjoy an active lifestyle.

APSEA has supported Glenn by providing consult visits from two PE teachers employed by APSEA who are trained and experienced in blindness and visual impairment. Julie feels that Glenn has had a huge impact on Rachel's skill levels and her positive approach to Physical Education.

Thank-you to Glenn and to all our Physical Educators who are making an effort to create an inclusive teaching environment and developing PE programs that celebrate active and healthy lifestyles for all students!

"Oh yeah, I've been there"

- by Marilyn Smulders

(Article and picture were published on the Dalnews website, dated April 23, 2008, and published in Dalhousie, the Alumni magazine.)

As Shelley (Berry) Adams walked across the stage of the Rebecca Cohn to accept her Bachelor of Social Work degree, she was surprised to hear applause. It was scattered here and there until it seemed

everyone in the packed auditorium was clapping. Unnerved, she kept on walking, one hand steady on the harness of her guide dog Buena.

"It was unexpected," says the 27-year-old Dartmouth resident, who was able to get a job in her field even before she graduated last fall. "I didn't know anyone there besides my parents and my husband." But a dog will always get attention, especially one as beautiful as Buena, a Labrador retriever with a glossy black coat and sad eyes. Ms. Adams was worried Buena would sniff the chancellor — as it was, her companion for the past year groaned loudly as if bored during the speech by an honorary degree recipient.

The applause? She knows she got it because her vision is impaired. But to her, it's not a big deal, just a part of life. She was diagnosed with the degenerative eye disease Retinitis Pigmentosa when she was two, after her grandmother decided a trip to the doctor was in order. "She needs someone to look at her legs," she remembers her grandmother saying, "She keeps tripping over things."

Still, going to university when you are visually impaired is a challenge, she admits. For example, getting her reading done was a major production: she'd have to scan textbook chapters and then have the computer read them out to her. "The computer isn't the most expressive reader," says Ms. Adams dryly. "There were a few times when my head hit the keyboard — it put me right to sleep."

Another problem was that sometimes her reading packages consisted of photocopies of articles—or photocopies of photocopies. "They wouldn't scan at all," she sighs. But she was able to complete her degree by distance education.

She found her professors in the Department of Social Work to be accommodating and sensitive to her needs.

She thinks living with vision loss makes her a better social worker. Since last spring, she has been working as the registration and referral co-ordinator for the CNIB and does most of her work over the telephone. "Everyone I talk to is adjusting to vision loss. If I feel it would be beneficial, I do disclose (I am also living with vision loss.) But I do understand what they're going through. It's very easy to empathize. Oh yeah, I've been there."



Shelley Adams and Buena.
(Nick Pearce Photo)

Article submitted by Jen Lesperance as Shelly is a former student who received service from APSEA in Riverview, NB and also attended short-term programs at the Centre.

Gotta Love Braille !!!

- by Glenda Parsons
APSEA Classroom Teacher

Have you ever wondered what really goes on in the classrooms at APSEA when the students are attending a short-term program? In my position as a classroom teacher, I have had many rewarding and incredible experiences, however, who can imagine anything more awesome than having the opportunity to enjoy a week with young braille users? Is there really anything out there that can surpass working with students who are like little sponges, crying out to learn their "brailles" (as one student called it)! Let me share my experience with you.

Since there are currently a number of young braille users in Atlantic Canada, the Braille Committee proposed a one week Pilot Project for young learners to spend a week together. Once approved, the goals and objectives for the week were set and the preparation began.

Finally, the week is here. I hear them before I see them. The clicking sound of their canes along with the obvious high energy of chatter brings a smile to my face and makes my heart beat faster sharing their excitement. Then I see them. Picture this: cute and bubbly little ones, with blonde and brown hair, all dressed as cute as buttons, bouncing into the classroom. They park their canes, hang up their jackets and backpacks, and the week begins.

The students become totally immersed in braille, complete with literacy experiences that all enjoyed along with unique opportunities for social interaction. For myself and the teachers working with me (Vicki Morrow and Sheila Jamieson), it is non-stop preparation and high energy, with every second thoroughly enjoyed.

Our heads are spinning with great ideas and we can't create them fast enough!

By the end of the week, these young braille users, now officially authors and illustrators, pack their creations and head for home. They will return to their schools with many new skills that can be added to their toolbox for learning. As for the teachers, well, we are ready for the weekend, but more inspired to teach than we ever thought possible. So now, I hope that you have enjoyed a small peek into what I do. Wouldn't you just love to be in my shoes?



Reading the morning message.



Making a tactile butterfly.



Check out this starfish!

Hearing-impaired Woodstock Winger Shines in Canadian Deaf Hockey Tourney

- by Matthew Flemming

(Article was published in the Carleton Free Press on June 3, 2008 and submitted by Mary Currie, Josh's DHH Itinerant Teacher.)

Sometimes a disability can give a person a chance to showcase ability. Sixteen year-old Josh Watling, of Woodstock, had just that chance. He got to play for Team Quebec in the seventh Canadian Deaf Ice Hockey championship in Whitby, Ontario. The tournament, which took place from May 1 to May 3, featured teams from British Columbia, the western prairies, Ontario and Quebec.

Watling isn't deaf, but is hard of hearing and uses a hearing aid. The road to land a spot on the team was a bit unusual. Watling's mother, Helen, heard about the championships in a newsletter for deaf and hard-of-hearing-people. From there, she did a search on the Internet and contacted the coach.

Since there was no Maritime team, they contacted the Quebec squad's coach. It was too far to travel for a tryout so they had to make a video of Watling in action. Their video must have been impressive. Watling made the team. Watling was the lone New Brunswicker, but there were two players from Nova Scotia.

"We waited about two weeks (after the video was sent)," says Watling. "They just told me I was on the team and to be in Whitby on the first of May." In the very first game, Watling picked up a point in a loss to the Western Prairies. The second game, against Ontario, was tougher. Ontario has a deaf hockey school that plays year round. Quebec lost 12-0.

Their third game against British Columbia was more competitive. Quebec won 9-6 and Watling had two goals and an assist.

The fourth game, also against B.C., was for the bronze medal. It was a squeaker, but Team Quebec prevailed with one minute left in overtime. Watling had a pair of assists, including a helper on the game winner.

“Team Quebec was so happy, due to not winning the last 10 (tournaments) before this in the past,” said Watling’s mother. Watling, who played midget hockey in Woodstock last season, says it was the “most competition he’d ever played in.” “It was a difficult experience,” he says. “There were guys there who play in the OHL, and pro in the Euroleague.”

The average age of the tournament players was 25, but Watling still managed 10 points, putting him in the top ten in scoring. He was also selected rookie of the tournament. Scouts watched the game, looking for players to represent Canada in the 2009 deaf hockey world championships in Winnipeg. Watling was approached to be an alternate.

The right winger says the game wasn’t much different, other than communication. He had to have translators to explain signing, and there was also the issue of playing for a French team. “The best part of everything was the amount of skill and competition,” says Watling. “There was lots of hitting. It was different playing with older and more skilled players.”

Deaf hockey is nearly identical to regular hockey. For those that can’t hear the whistle blow, strobe lights indicate a stoppage of play. Watling hopes to play Midget AAA next season and plans to play on Team Quebec again in 2010 – unless a

Maritime deaf and hard-of-hearing team is formed.

A Chance to Reach Out: Old technology opens up a whole new world for county teen

(Article was published in the Pictou County News, June 13, 2008 and submitted by Jennifer MacLeod, Tony’s DHH Itinerant Teacher.)

How much do you take ordering a pizza for granted? Or calling just to say hello, or I love you?

Tony Hart doesn’t.

He’s hearing impaired. And, until now, the grade 10 Landsdowne resident couldn’t easily chat with others, or make plans over the phone.

The Heather Council of Aliant Telecom Pioneers fixed all that recently, donating a TTY machine to Tony at Northumberland Regional High School.

The machine, also known as a teletypewriter, costs \$640. It’s not new technology, but it opens doors for Hart.

Like any phone user, Hart can now dial someone up to pass the time, snag a pep-and-cheese or even save his life.

“My mom would call for me before,” Hart said through a sign interpreter. “I’ve used the machine before to practise on it, but I couldn’t see what the other person was typing. Now I can call my friends and my cousin in Westville and talk.”

Communication can be difficult even with other hearing impaired people. Hart uses the American-style of sign language, but some people use the old Maritime style. He won’t have to worry about that on the TTY, which operates similar to a computer instant messaging system - he types

messages on the screen and messages from others pop up once a call is placed.

His calls need not be to folks with a TTY device - Aliant offers a relay service where an operator takes the information down and it is passed on to the receiver on his behalf.

Perhaps the biggest benefit for him will be that the machine is always there. If there's an emergency, Hart can now communicate more effectively with responders, allowing them to assess the situation. Before, another person would be needed to give details during an emergency call, which would waste valuable time.

"I like everything about it, and I can't wait to use it," Hart said. "I'm excited to start chatting."

Staffing Update 2008-09

Below is a further update on staff changes for the coming school year.

Jackie Kelly - BVI Itinerant Teacher, Districts 6&8 (Sussex/Saint John, NB)

Sacha Russell - DHH Itinerant Teacher, School District 02 (Moncton, NB)

Susan McIntosh - DHH Itinerant Teacher, AVRSB (Kentville, NS)

Leanne Jenkins - DHH Itinerant Teacher, CCRSB (Amherst, NS)

Charity Turner - BVI Preschool Consultant (New Brunswick)

Annette Manuel - Classroom Teacher

Laurie Ann Strange - Classroom Teacher

Stephanie Corbett - Classroom Teacher

Denise Meade - Academic/Language Evaluator (DHH Assessment Team)

Vicki Morrow - BVI Itinerant Teacher and Assistive Technology Teacher (PEI)

Frank Murphy - BVI Itinerant Teacher, HRSB (Halifax, NS)

Leslie Soulsby - BVI Itinerant Teacher, District 18 (Fredericton, NB)

Jill Ginn - DHH Itinerant Teacher, HRSB (Halifax, NS)

Eileen Conway-Martin - BVI Itinerant Teacher, District 16 (Miramichi, NB)

Melissa Rohloff - BVI Itinerant Teacher, HRSB (Halifax, NS)

Nancy Bradley - BVI Itinerant Teacher, District 02 (Moncton, NB)

Fern Bannister - BVI Itinerant Teacher, District 17/18 (Oromocto/Fredericton, NB)

Dominique Kerr - Supervisor of Alternate Format Production

Vicki Jeans - BVI Director of Programs

Mary Currie - DHH Itinerant Teacher, District 18 (Fredericton, NB)

Andrew Watterworth - DHH Itinerant Teacher, District 08 (Saint John, NB)

APSEA Calendar for 2008-2009

Monday 1 September 2008	Labour Day
Tuesday 2 September 2008	Organizational Day for Teachers
Monday 13 October 2008	Thanksgiving Day
Monday 20 October to Thursday 23 October 2008	APSEA Annual Inservice
Friday 24 October 2008	NSTU Provincial Inservice
Tuesday 11 November 2008	Remembrance Day
Friday 19 December 2008	Last Working Day Before Christmas
Monday 5 January 2009	First Working Day After Christmas
Monday 2 March to Friday 6 March 2009	March Break - NB
Monday 16 March to Friday 20 March 2009	March Break - NS & PEI
Thursday 9 April 2009	NL - Last Day of School (Spring Break)
Tuesday 21 April 2009	NL - School Reopens
Friday 10 April 2009	Good Friday
Monday 13 April 2009	Easter Monday
Monday 18 May 2009	Victoria Day
Monday 29 June 2009	Last Full Day of Classes

Looking Ahead

The end of the school year is here. Coming at the end of a busy period, the holidays will enable many to change gear and follow up on all those plans made weeks and months earlier. For others, there may be some sadness. In some cases, this is a time for saying goodbye, as some of us will be leaving for new adventures in other places. However, as someone once said, "For every joyful reunion, there must have been a farewell."

As we gaze beyond July and August, toward the 2008-09 school year, exciting challenges and opportunities loom large. APSEA's strategic plan will become a major focus, as we seek to engage our entire community in a process to clarify our vision, mission, goals and action plans ... all aimed at doing the best we can for the children we serve.

I wish you all a very restful and safe break over the summer and trust that, whether you chose to stay at home or go away, you get the necessary recharge. May you rest, relax, and build fond memories ...

All the best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bertram Tulk". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Bertram Tulk, EdD
Superintendent