



A Year in Review: Cindy Williams

As the end of the 2020-2021 school year draws to a close, I reflect on what a long strange year it's been. In actuality, the year went by pretty fast; although it was a different year involving learning about Zoom, unmuting yourself, and teaching and learning from a distance. Throughout the journey of distance learning, we have all grown in some way, and I envision the way our programs operate will forever be changed with some form of distance learning occurring. Through distance learning, we were able to serve some students via virtual programs who hadn't taken part in or had minimally taken part in our center base programs. The silver lining is the pandemic has provided the opportunity to learn, grow, and serve students in a different way.

As we adapted throughout this school year, we made a last-minute adaptation to our teen program scheduled the week of April 18th. We ended up having a day program for the teens who had registered for our virtual program as those who had, lived in close proximity. After making phone calls to the families and having all the stars align, our first center-based program of the school year took place on-site at NDVS/SB on April 18th. It was such a pleasure to see the students in person and work with them hands-on.

The excitement will continue as we look forward to our upcoming summer programs which are all scheduled to take place in-person. The following is information on our upcoming summer programs.

Our **Middle School Summer Program** is taking place June 6-9, 2021 in the beautiful Lake Meti-

goshe area! This program is for students in 7-9/10th grades and will include taking part in activities through Annie's House. Please register by May 21st. See our [Middle School Summer Program Flyer](#) for further information.

We look forward to your teen joining us for our **High School Summer Transition & Career Program!** This program is intended for students currently in grades 9 – 12 and will focus on lessons regarding college and employment readiness – including higher education access and employment skills such as interviewing and job research.

Students will also experience:

- a camping experience when we camp at a local campground
- a restaurant tour and opportunity to learn about various jobs and skills needed to work in a restaurant
- a college tour

Upcoming Events:

- MAY 2-6**
ELEMENTARY STP
- MAY 16-21**
ADULT PROGRAMMING
- MAY 28**
END OF ACADEMIC YEAR
- JUNE 6-9**
MIDDLE SCHOOL CAMP
- AUG 1-4**
KIDS CAMP

Inside this issue:

A YEAR IN REVIEW	1
SHORT TERM PROGRAM CALENDAR	2
HOW TO BORROW TECH	3
ELBRAILLE FOCUS 40	3
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST: TRACY WICKEN	4
SUPERINTENDENT'S SCOOP	5
BRaille ACCESS CENTER	6

REACHING OUT

A Year in Review (cont. from page 1)

- an interview with a Park Ranger and various careers available through the park and recreation service
- lessons incorporating the Expanded Core Curriculum along with some fun!

This program will take place June 20 - 23 (Sunday drop-off between 5-6pm and Wednesday pick-up at 1pm) **in Grand Forks at NDVS/SB!** The registration deadline is June 9th.

Our **Elementary Summer Program** (grades 1-5/6th) takes place August 1-4 on-site at NDVS/SB in Grand Forks and will follow the ND State Library summer reading program *Tails and Tales*. Join us for some fun, learning

and animal adventures! Keep a look-out for further information to come.

Please contact me through email ckwillia@nd.gov or phone 701-795-2704 to register for any of our upcoming summer programs or with any questions regarding our short-term programs. We have also included our short-term program calendar for the upcoming 2021-22 school year in our newsletter.

Thank you for sending your child to learn and discover new experiences and independence while attending our programs! We wish all of our students and families a joyful summer and look forward to working with them during our Short-Term Programs!

NDVS/SB Short Term Program Calendar 2021-2022

Fall 2021

Aug. 23 School Begins
Sept. 12 - 17 Adult STP
Sept. 19-23 Middle School (6-9th) STP
Oct. 10 - 14 Elementary (1-5th grade) STP
Oct. 20 - 22 Dakotas AER Conference hosted by ND
Nov. 14 - 18 Teen STP/Careers (10-12th)
Dec. 2 - 4 Middle School JAM (7-10th grade)
Dec. 5 - 10 Adult STP

2022

January 9-13 Elementary Literacy STP (1-5th grade)
Jan. 30 - Feb 4 Middle School/Teen STP (7-12th grade)

Feb. 4 & 5 Goalball Event with SDSBVI joining us
Mar. 6 - 11 Teen STP/Careers (10-12th)
Mar. 11 - 12 SD Goalball trip
Mar. 20 - 25 Adult STP
April 3 - 7 Middle School STP (6-9th grade)
April 22 - 23 Family Weekend
May 1 - 5 Elementary STP (1-5th)
May 15 - 20 Adult STP
May 27 End of Academic year

June 5 - 8 Middle School Summer Program - off-site (6/7th - 9th)
June 5 - 10 Adult STP
TBD Medora Teen Work Experience Camp (10 - 12th)
July 31 - Aug. 3 Elementary Summer Program (Sun - Wed; 1 - 5th/6th grade)

#97

How to borrow technology equipment from NDVS/SB

Contact Tracy, Laurie, or Lilly (APH technology items). We will then let you know what is available and how long it can be loaned.

Loans can be either short term or long term depending on the item and quantity we have in our inventories.

If you are no longer using an item, please send the item back. Please contact us and we will help facilitate the return of the items safely to NDVS/SB.

When it comes to purchasing or grants for items, Tracy or Laurie can help guide you or your clients in that direction.

If you are needing assistance with any technology items like assessments for students/clients or just needing to learn about the item, contact Tracy or Laurie for assistance.

Contact us for more information

Tracy Wicken – (701) 795-2720 or trwicken@nd.gov

Laurie Westling – (701) 795-2710 or lchaput@nd.gov

Lilly Mankie – (701) 795-2732 or lmankie@nd.gov

IBraille Focus 40: Laurie Westling

The 5th Generation of the Focus 40 Blue is a durable, lightweight Braille Display drop tested and designed to take on the challenges of every-day bumps and scrapes. Its user-friendly keyboard, convenient front panel controls, and retooled Braille pins make for smooth and quiet operation. With Bluetooth connectivity for five devices, a built-in Scratchpad, a USB-C port, and tough, compact, portable design, the Focus 40 Blue ensures reliable operation whether you're on the go at work, traveling the world, or simply relaxing at home.



Focus 40 Blue Braille Display

REACHING OUT

Assistive Technology Specialist: Tracy Wicken

I am the assistive technology specialist/teacher at NDVS/SB. I have been at NDVS/SB for 16 years. I teach assistive technology to students and adults, evaluate to see what AT might be suitable for them to use, and consult with teachers/employers on assistive technology. I also research new and emerging AT as NDVS/SB is a demonstration center for assistive technology for those who are visually impaired in the state of North Dakota.

I am motivated to do what I do by the smiles, words, or happy tears I get from those I have helped to do something that they didn't think they could because of their vision loss. I like to try to find an answer for what might help them and help them do what they want to do for themselves. A personal goal that I have for myself is to try my best to hear what a person is needing and provide options and solutions to that need.

At the time I started college, special education and mainstreaming in the least restrictive environment was just beginning. I wanted to work in a field that I felt I could make a difference, so I chose to be a teacher of students with special needs. I lived in a city that had a school specifically for the blind so I wanted to be specialized in that area. I got my certification as a teacher of the visually impaired as an undergraduate which you could do at that time. I took graduate level courses as an undergraduate. I worked for the state of ND as a Communications Instructor at Services for the Visually Impaired, a division of Vocational Rehabilitation. There I taught communication skills to visually impaired adults for six years then transitioned to being a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist through Voc. Rehab. covering Northeast ND for 14 years.

I was very comfortable in my work. I was good at what I did and I really loved the clients that I served, but there was something missing. I needed a challenge and I wanted to learn more about an instructional area that was expanding and changing --assistive technology. I dabbled a bit into it in my current position but when the position at NDVS/SB opened, I felt ready to take on that challenge. I knew it would fill that missing piece and allow me to help people and learn more about something that kind of scared me but excited me at the same time.

I made the educational decisions I did because I wanted to be specialized in the field of vision loss. I really, really enjoyed learning and going to school. I met many of the colleagues I currently have over the course of my educational journey and I'm grateful for that.



Superintendent's Scoop: Paul Olson

Ensuring that we would continue to provide support and instruction to everyone we serve during the past school year was our number one priority at NDVS/SB. Although on-site, short-term programs were on hold due to the risks of gathering in person, virtual sessions for small groups of students were substituted with great success. Between Microsoft Teams video conferencing and Zoom, these small group sessions continued while instructors covered a variety of special topics. No one had the impression that this type of service delivery was equal to face-to-face interaction with students, but we think what was most important was maintaining relationships and providing encouragement during the most stressful time period in recent history.

How we would provide outreach service delivery to students as well as children under three years of age was very uncertain as we began the school year. Great caution was taken when doing visits to homes and schools throughout the fall and winter. Staff wore personal protective gear and used a lot of hand sanitizer to protect themselves, children, family members and other educators. In spite of the fears and challenges our staff rose to the occasion and provided some of the best and most innovative services we have ever delivered.

New ways of doing things often come during crisis. Even though we all know change can be wonderful, it is difficult to transform quickly and easily. Change causes uncertainty, but it can also be a catalyst for creativity and growth. A good example of this was the proliferation of new educational videos we produced on a variety of topics and skills. Our videos are called Golden Guides and can be found on our website under different categories. These instructional videos target the life skills that are vital to our students and adult clients with visual impairment. We continue to get rave reviews and some have become known nationally. This is evidence of success in our goal of becoming the best small agency/school serving people who are blind and visually impaired in the country.

We are looking forward to resuming on-site short-term programs in June. Our school will be full of renewed energy as we get kids the hallways again. Outreach services across the state to students and adults will never be quite the same; it will be better because it will be a combination of direct and virtual. As we reach summer there will be some time for reflection and planning as we set new goals for the upcoming fiscal biennium in North Dakota. We are blessed with many supporters around the state with our partners—especially the North Dakota Association of the Blind. I would also be remiss in not thanking Governor Burgum and the legislature for their ongoing support of our mission and granting us the resources to go forward with confidence.

I hope this summer brings all of you some peace and happiness as well as hope for the future.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson--Superintendent

REACHING OUT

Braille Access Center: Leslie Pederson



The Braille Access Center at NDVS/SB is here to provide braille and large print materials to organizations, businesses, schools, individuals, and others who need information in an alternative format.

Also home to NDVS/SB's 3D printer, the Braille Access Center has recently been printing some interesting objects from Project Core. They have developed sets of 3D symbols to represent 36 different vocabulary words such as "go," "like," "not," "more," "want," "same," and "different." Each tactual symbol is printed on a base that has a shape, texture, and color that mark the word category. Each also includes a unique raised element, the printed word, and braille to make the individual word.

If you would like more information, or to see how they are to be used with students check out project-core.com/3d-symbols/

Reaching Out is published by the ND Vision Services/School for the Blind, an agency funded by the state of North Dakota for the benefit of people with visual impairments. ND Vision Services/School for the Blind is a division of the ND Department of Public Instruction. NDVS/SB does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in employment or provision of services. Reaching Out is available in alternative formats upon request. Please send comments to:



REACHING OUT
ND Vision Services/
School for the Blind
500 Stanford Road
Grand Forks, ND 58203-2799

Superintendent of Public Instruction: Kirsten Baesler
Superintendent, ND Vision Services/School for the Blind: Paul Olson (polson@nd.gov)
Reaching Out Editor: Ryan Torgerson (rltorg@nd.gov) and Leslie Pederson (lesped@nd.gov)